Stories of Life, Love and Adventure

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2 Serials and

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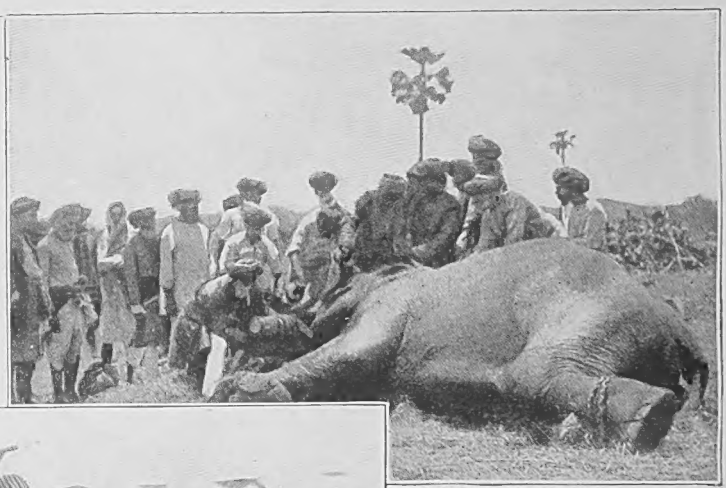
This is a page of elephant pictures furnished by Gordon McCreagh, known to you through the "Camp-Fire" and his stories in the magazine. To the right the natives are sawing off the tusks of an old bull elephant. "Hathi" had become vicious, and some of his weapons had to be taken away from him.



"Keddah" work. Elephants are the Government monopoly, and are caught by being driven into a palisaded enclosure. The process, after locating a herd, takes from one to two or three months. After the first tremendous excitement has died down, which takes about a week, tame females go in and hustle their wild brothers up to stout trees, when the *mahouts*, or elephant men, slip to the ground and rope them by the hind leg. A curious fact is that a wild elephant has never been known to pluck a *mahout* down from his perch on the neck of a tame one. They don't seem to disassociate the man from the beast. But once he is on the ground they will charge at the least opportunity.

The picture shows a pair of females "handling" a fractious youngster.

Above is the jungle king in man's gaudy trimmings—the Raja's elephant at Mysore. He is decked out in all the formal war-paint and trappings carefully prescribed for ceremonies of state. The particular occasion was a durbar in honor of a visit from the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, and Lady Curzon. The elephant is giving the royal salute to their Excellencies.

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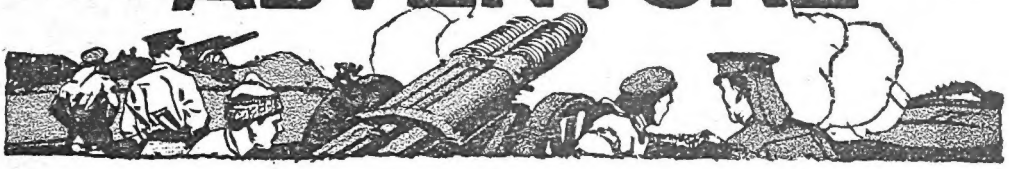

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No 2

A ONE-MAN JOB
A COMPLETE NOVEL

Harold Kellock and
George Schuyler Schaeffer.

Authors of "For La Soledad"

LAID in an immense V on the dark, still surface of the water were two long, white-crested ridges which sloped back from either side of the steamer's prow like a gigantic cable holding the vessel in leash. At half speed the ship slipped on so quietly that Carol Curtis, standing on the deck, had an odd illusion that it had stopped.

The reflections of the stars in the water were as motionless as those stars themselves and as the blackness which filled the space between. Only one dim constellation, hanging so low over the bow that it seemed to have slipped down from the sky and to rest on the distant waters, appeared to swim toward her, twinkling into greater breadth and brightness until it became not a group of stars, but the lights of the waterfront and the city beyond.

Ahead and on both sides great murky shadows of hills and mountains detached themselves from the gloom and bore down on the vessel, walling it in. Out of the stillness came strange, confused sounds which gradually resolved themselves into the cries of watermen, the creaking of oars, the rattle of wheels on rough pavements, the softened strains of a band, very far away, and, close by, the throbbing of a guitar and the wail of a human voice singing a plaintive, half-barbaric song.

As the land closed in on her, the girl had an undefined feeling of oppression. There seemed to be a spirit of menace in the grim shadows which rose up against the stars. For a few moments this feeling held her just as the encircling land seemed to hold the ship, and then . . .

"Gangway! Gangway, please!"

A knot of scurrying sailors ran by, paying out a mooring cable and, with a sudden jolt, her vague imaginings were driven away and her mind awakened to present reality.

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She wondered if her brother would be at the wharf to meet her. There had been yellow fever at the last port at which the steamer should have called, so it had come on without stopping and now was arriving at Sta. Rita a day ahead of schedule. She knew that Ned lived somewhere on the outskirts of the city and it was quite possible he would not hear of the vessel's arrival in time to be at the landing when she tied up. But even if he were not there, the case would not be serious. Carol could stay aboard for the night or else find some sort of conveyance to drive her to his house.

With a prodigious amount of shouting from steamer to shore and from shore to steamer, and much racing to and fro of barefooted *peones* on the wharf and rattling and clanking of donkey-engines on board, the *Montevideo* got her lines ashore, lashed herself snugly to the long pier and put out her gangplank. In the throng of yellow and brown boys and men who charged up to the steamer's deck, fighting for the hand-baggage of the passengers, were mingled a few white suits, the mark of the gentleman in Sta. Rita, but none of them was Ned.

Protected from the rapacious porters by one of the ship's quartermasters, Carol descended to the wharf and walked its length, but no Ned appeared. At the steamer's side again, she found that all the baggage from her cabin had been put ashore by a zealous steward. It was annoying, for if she were to spend the night aboard, all of it would have to be carried back.

On hearing, however, that she proposed to return to the ship, the steward interposed spiritedly.

"It wouldn't do at all, ma'am," he declared solemnly. "You'd never stand the mosquitoes. Down 'ere they're something chronic. And narsty smells, ma'am, wouldn't do for a lady. Besides, we'll be working cargo all night and, what with the yelling and jabbering of these 'eathen and the noise of the winches, you'll never sleep a wink."

His persistence and assurance so wrought on Carol's indecision that ten minutes later she was climbing into a ramshackle victoria drawn by two rat-like ponies, and the steward, in his best cockney Spanish, was explaining to the villainous-looking driver that the lady was to be taken to the house of Mr. Curtis near the new Americano railroad station and that great care must be exercised that none of the baggage, with which the crazy vehicle was piled high, should fall out.

TO THE accompaniment of a jingling bell, sounded by the driver's foot, the diminutive animals started off at a surprising rate. The way led through a succession of narrow, badly-lighted streets, some of them roughly paved with irregular cobbles, others mere lanes of mud between closely shuttered houses.

The town was larger than Carol had supposed and the station seemed to be a long way off. But presently the dwellings grew smaller and poorer, thatched roofs took the place of tile and the houses, instead of adjoining one another, stood far apart. Great patches of darkness appeared, which she judged must be open fields. Carol breathed more freely. The night air of the narrow streets had not been pleasant.

In another five minutes they were on a country road of indescribable roughness. They came to a fork at which the horses apparently took the wrong turning, for the driver checked them with an oath and swung them back into the other branch. As he did so, he looked back and addressed to Carol a remark she could not understand. Her distinct vision of the man's face and the tone of his voice sent a shudder through her. But she quickly laughed at herself. She was in the twentieth century and a civilized country.

The carriage stopped before a one-story house standing close to the road. The driver got down from the box and began to unload her baggage. Carol saw no signs of a railroad station, nor did the dark, shuttered dwelling look like the bungalow which Ned had described to her.

"Mr. Curtis?" She asked the driver.

"*Si, si,*" he answered, continuing to lift down bags and boxes.

"Go call him out," she said, not leaving the seat.

The man did not understand, so she made herself clear with signs. The driver went to the door, knocked and held a brief colloquy with some one inside. Presently he returned with another man, who spoke to her in halting, broken English.

"Mr. Curtis go away," he explained. "Come back soon. You come in; wait."

"Who are you?" demanded Carol. "His servant?"

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"Yes, his servant," answered the man. "And yours."

Carol was horribly frightened, but she was able to command herself sufficiently to realize that the last thing she should do was to let these men see that she was afraid.

"No," she said. "I'll wait for him here. If he does not come in a few minutes, I'll drive back to the steamer."

The man scowled and translated to the driver, who immediately protested vigorously.

"The horses are too tired," said the interpreter. "You must come in; wait."

He walked to the house and quickly came back with another person, a woman. She stepped up to Carol, holding out her hand and signing for her to dismount from the carriage. Partially reassured, and reflecting that if these men intended evil, they would easily be able to force her into the house, Carol stepped down and followed the woman. The men came behind, carrying her baggage.

The front door opened directly on a large, bare room. At the back was a counter on which stood some empty glasses and a candle; on the wall behind were shelves holding bottles; at one side of the room was a long wooden bench; in a corner, two chairs with hide seats.

Carol started back. It was impossible that Ned should live in such a place. The door slammed behind her and she heard the grating of a bolt being shot home. She wanted to shriek, but she knew that she needed every bit of resource she could muster. If she were to escape from whatever evil she had got into, she must retain every particle of her self-command.

She whirled about on the man who spoke English.

"Where am I and what are you doing?" she demanded.

The man avoided her eye.

"It is nothing. It is all right," he muttered.

The woman, who in the light appeared to be a comely, though rather sharp-featured, person of middle age, motioned Carol to a chair. Carol remained standing, her face calm, but every muscle in her body tense and rigid. The two men went into an adjoining room, leaving her alone with the woman, who walked slowly to the back of the counter, produced a dirty white-enamel coffee-pot, filled two small cups with a viscous black fluid and offered one to Carol with an ingratiating smile.

Carol shook her head and motioned the cup away. It was probably drugged, she thought. Wildly she cast about for some way of escape. She looked at the woman, tried to smile appealingly and motioned toward the outer door, but the woman ignored the gesture. Carol was at the limit of her self-control.

Just then from the road outside came the sound of galloping hoof-beats. Carol braced herself and made ready to scream when the horseman was opposite the house. The woman must have read the resolution in her eyes, for she called sharply. The two men rushed into the room and seized Carol's shoulders and wrists while the woman threw a cloth over her face. The girl struggled frantically and fruitlessly. She tried to cry out, but the muffling cloth turned her cries into inarticulate chokings and gurglings.

She heard a sharp knocking at the door and with it her captors grew rougher. She was shoved and hauled and hustled into the next room. The knocking continued and then a voice called out impatiently in Spanish.

Instantly she felt one of the men let go and the other grasp her more firmly. The door between the rooms was slammed shut and she heard footsteps hurrying through the other room toward the front door. She stopped struggling and listened.

The front door was unbolted and opened. There were voices: the coachman's, servile, apologetic, and another, crisp and stern. What they said, she could not guess. Suddenly the strange voice rapped out a sharp sentence, the woman unwound the cloth from her head and the man released his hold. Dazed and shaken as she was, she was yet able to see from their attitudes and expressions that they were as terrified as she had been. The command from the other room was repeated and the man hesitatingly opened the door and motioned her to go through.

Standing in the middle of the room was a man dressed in snugly fitting blue drill of a military cut and high, mud-splashed boots. In contrast to her two swarthy little captors, he was tall and fair-haired, with finely chiseled features, and he was standing with a sort of imperious dignity while the coachman knelt on the floor beside him fumbling abjectly at his spurs. Carol was vaguely

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conscious of the grace and ease and power of his pose, but what held her gaze was his eyes.

At first, as she stepped toward him, they seemed black and wide and soft, alight with astonishment and sympathy. He started back slightly, then recovered himself and, suddenly bending down toward the coachman, his pupils contracted to pinpoints of steely gray. A single impatient Spanish word came from him, his foot moved slightly, and the man who was removing his spurs jumped back with a little squeak of dismay, as if he had received a blow.

Then the newcomer swept off his hat and addressed Carol in English with a slight accent.

"Madame, pray be seated while your baggage is being put back in the carriage."

To her amazement, Carol found herself complying.

The stranger spoke quietly to the coachman, called to the man in the other room and the two rushed to carry her things outside.

"It is to the American railroad settlement you wish to go, no? The house of Mr——?"

"Curtis," said Carol.

"I shall give myself the pleasure of accompanying you," he said, bowing.

Carol got in the carriage and the stranger followed, taking the seat opposite her. As they drove off, she saw the man who had been in the house mount a horse, evidently her rescuer's, and follow them.

It was an eerie ride. She did not know why, but somehow she felt absolute confidence that this man was doing as he promised and taking her to her brother's house. He seemed not to wish to talk and she felt unable to start any conversation.

Once he said: "It was a lamentable mistake and I rejoice that I arrived to remedy it. The man shall suffer." To which she nodded and mumbled inarticulate thanks.

Again: "It is a chilly evening. I trust that you keep warm."

Near the better-lighted and more decent part of town, she saw a pedestrian on a street corner casting an idle glance at the carriage, suddenly stop still and stare after it in open-mouthed astonishment.

At the next corner, they passed a mounted policeman. He gaped at them and then, when they had gone on half a block, lashed his horse suddenly and galloped into a side street. The man who had been riding behind on the stranger's horse drew up and spoke a few words into the carriage, at which her rescuer merely smiled and shook his head.

Then, from some barracks near by, came a clear, high-pitched bugle call. Her protector heard it. He shrugged his shoulders, smiled whimsically and spoke over his shoulder to the coachman. The carriage stopped.

The man stepped out and, hat in hand, spoke to her:

"I greatly regret that I must leave you, madame, but I can assure you that you are absolutely safe. This man will drive you to your destination with all certainty. One request I would make of you, that you do not report him to the authorities. I will undertake that his punishment is complete."

And, under the compelling power of those eyes, she found herself assenting. For the rest, she was in no state to express gracefully her thanks, but to what phrases she did mumble, the man listened respectfully and then, bowing, answered:

"The small service has been a great pleasure to me. I only trust that I may have further opportunities to be of assistance to you."

He bowed once more and, turning, walked to where the man stood holding his horse.

As he galloped back along the street, Carol seemed to herself to be still regarding two gray-black eyes and wondering whether it was their kindness or their power that had so impressed them on her memory.

Five minutes later a horse was reined in almost against the carriage wheels. Leaning over its neck was the eager face of her brother Ned.

"Hello there, Carol!" he shouted. "Where in the world have you been? I've been hunting all over for you."

II

A FAIR-SIZED river, the Guasima ran through the easterly outskirts of Sta. Rita, and just beyond this stream, where the big wagon bridge crossed it, about a mile in from the harbor, stood the terminal yards and the construction headquarters of the Sta. Rita and Northern Railroad. The station and headquarters of the construction staff was a big, barn-like wooden structure facing away from the river across the half-dozen tracks which

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formed the yard, a single one of which had been extended to the harbor front, where a channel was being dredged and wharves constructed for the permanent terminus.

Some of the men lived in the station and others occupied cottages which were scattered over the hill beyond the yard. Just across the tracks from the station stood a little one-story red brick building, originally built as an overseer's house in the days when the terminal site had been a plantation. Here the superintendent of construction had his offices.

This one-story structure contained a single room divided by a partition, on one side of which a squad of clerks toiled over their accounts. On the other side a little reception space was railed off. Just within the rail stood a stenographer's table and in the farther corner, by a window, the great shiny oak desk of the superintendent.

An imposing array of filing-cases was ranged along the partition wall, and numerous maps and blue-prints were tacked up conspicuously. Along the entire length of one wall stretched a drawing which appeared to represent a cross section of some interminable mountain range, splotched and blocked off and checkered with crayons of various colors.

To the layman, this might have seemed a mad, futurist dream. But John Harding, the superintendent, could look at it and tell at a glance how many spadefuls of earth had been dug and how many were still to dig and how many tons of dynamite and yards of fuse would be needed before the first train could run over the road.

The afternoon was dragging to that point at which the tropical day plunges into evening when Harding came in. He was one of those towering, Herculean men who carry their height so well that it is scarcely noticeable. The "old man," as his subordinates called him, was still a couple of years under forty. There was no trace of gray in his light hair and crisp mustache, and the vitality of youth glowed in his steel-gray eyes.

He came in briskly enough, though he had been on a tour of inspection since six o'clock that morning, and his muddy boots and dust-covered khaki clothes indicated a strenuous day. As he entered, he flung a cheerful greeting at the young man, Ned Curtis, who occupied the desk near the railing.

"A bit late tonight, Mr. Harding," suggested Curtis.

"Ye-es," replied the big man, disposing of hat and coat preparatory to settling down at his desk.

"There were some things needed looking after. Locomotive ditched near the rail head. Then I found a couple of professional gamblers in Number Two camp and had to clean 'em out before they cleaned the crowd. Also a stabbing scrape up in the ballast camp."

"Murder?" queried Curtis.

"Um," said Harding absently, hastily scraping out a pipe as he glanced at a little pile of mail before him. "Jamaica nigger knifed by a Spaniard who said he stole a bottle of beer. But the blacks threatened to bolt into the *monte* and Kelly wasn't handling it very well. Sister get here?"

"Yes, the boat got in last night. She——"

Ned stopped short, for Harding had given a snort of disgust, which obviously had been caused by something in the letter at the top of the pile. Curtis, seeing that Harding was too thoroughly occupied to hear about his sister, said no more, and again took up the force reports which he had been collating when his chief came in.

Harding rustled rapidly through his mail and then fished out the first letter he had read and perused it a second time, frowning thoughtfully.

"Ned," he said, "take down a cable."

The younger man seized his dictation book.

"Ready," said Harding. "To the New York office: 'Referring to my letter April 10 requesting appropriation for widening before rainy season all cuts already completed and your letter April 20 refusing same, I consider same of supreme importance.' If you find a stronger word in the code, put it in. 'Cuts in present shape will not stand. Estimate direct damage not less than one hundred thousand dollars. Indirect, due to blocking line and general disorganization of work, much greater. Reply by cable if can possibly reconsider.' "

He paused and had the message read to him.

"That'll do," he said. "Put it in code and send it immediately."

With a nervous gesture, which his secretary had noted was becoming more and more characteristic, he raised his powerful body from the chair and stood for a moment

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frowning at the letter lying spread out on his desk. Then he commenced to pace to and fro across the room.

"Suppose they don't do it?" he remarked aloud. "The rains are due in four weeks. And the whole job will be shot to pieces with the first storm." He paused and glared at a map on the wall. "Idiots!" he shot out, clenching his fist.

Curtis said nothing. Harding was much given to using the young man's presence for crystallizing his thoughts in words, and Ned knew that when his chief chose thus to vent his feelings, replies and comments were unnecessary and undesired.

Harding continued to pace the floor impatiently.

"Ned," he asked, "what do you think is the matter with that gang in New York?"

"I suppose they have no idea what building a railroad is, sir," answered the young man.

"Perhaps," conceded Harding, frowning again. "But why should they, a lot of hard-headed business men, continually interfere with the management of work they know nothing about? Why should they try to balk us at every turn? It's beyond me."

He gave a quick, nervous jerk of head and shoulders, as if literally shaking himself free from the harassing problem, and applied himself to the mass of daily detail work piled on his desk.

After half an hour, he shot across at Curtis—

"Didn't you ask me to have dinner with you tonight and meet your sister?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then it's time to knock off. Send your cable over by the boy and let's shut up shop."

The young man looked at his watch and smiled to himself. Dinner was scheduled for six-thirty. His minute-hand was just past the half hour and Harding still must go home and change his clothes. But he had warned his sister that they would probably be late. He had explained that those who worked under John Harding were not slaves of the clock.

Harding, as he went off to dress, was bored at the prospect of the dinner. He had had a hard day, he did not feel up to sustaining a polite conversation, and he was reaching the age where a work-absorbed bachelor becomes more and more indifferent to the charms of some one's sister. However, young Curtis was a good boy and he could do no less than go. So he bathed hurriedly and got into a suit of cool, immaculate white duck and presented himself at Curtis's little cottage, a few hundred yards away from headquarters, not more than twenty minutes late. His mode of life had made him an adept at quick dressing.

HE WAS relieved to find that Curtis's sister was neither pert nor gushy nor shy. She was a comfortable person to talk to, and good to look upon; a tall dark-haired girl with fine brown eyes and an air of perfect repose mingled with unexpected flashes of vivacity. He had not been at the table many minutes before he confessed to himself that he was glad he had come, and long before the dessert he was willing to admit that Miss Curtis was a decided asset.

The dessert was Carol's triumph. It was an apple pie baked with her own hands, the sort of pie Northern men in the tropics sometimes dream about and wake up with a bad case of homesickness. Ned was extremely fond of apple pie, so she had brought the fresh fruit all the way from New York.

"It's centuries since I've eaten a real apple pie," remarked Harding laughingly over his second helping.

Meanwhile Carol had been telling of her startling initiation into the life of Sta. Rita. Though she spoke lightly of her adventure and told with a play of humor of her abduction, Harding could see she had been badly shocked and frightened.

"That was a fine welcome!" he exclaimed impatiently. "Ned, you should have told me immediately."

"I haven't had much chance, sir," replied the young man.

"That's true," chuckled Harding. "Would you remember those two scoundrels, Miss Curtis?"

"I'm afraid not," confessed Carol.

"Your rescuer?"

"Oh, certainly," she said, and after a moment of hesitation added, "He is the sort of man you don't easily forget."

"You're sure he was a native?"

"He was not an American." Carol paused and laughed. "It's hard to remember that these neighbors of ours down here are also Americans. He spoke English with the slightest accent. A very impressive person, whatever he was. It wasn't that

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those ruffians treated him like a god, or that he was especially handsome, but there was something about him—an air—something tense and fine. Somehow he suggested a finely tempered sword."

Carol broke off with a little, embarrassed laugh. She had been speaking very slowly.

"I should like to meet him," declared Harding.

"I hope I shall meet him again," said Carol thoughtfully.

"I'll lodge a complaint with the *alcade* the first thing in the morning," said Harding. "The authorities will probably do what they always do—nothing. But the effect will be to keep those thievish scoundrels more circumspect for a while."

"But you mustn't, Mr. Harding," put in Carol hastily.

"Carol gave the chap some sort of promise, sir," explained Ned.

Harding looked at the girl quickly and he thought he saw a slight flush steal over her face.

"He said the men would be punished," she asserted. "He spoke with authority and I—I believed him."

"All right then. If you promised."

Harding fell to wondering who this mysterious rescuer could be. He thought of all the high-class natives he knew in Sta. Rita, but none answered the description of this tall, tense stranger. He glanced across the table at Carol again, but she had risen and her face was in the shadow.

"Shall we have our coffee on the veranda?" she suggested.

It was pleasant to sit there in the screen-enclosed darkness, smoking and sipping the fragrant native coffee and listening to the rare sound of a well-modulated feminine voice speaking English. John Harding, hardened expatriate and dweller in the wilderness, confessed to himself that the girl's voice and the indistinct outline of her white dress there in the shadow, gave the place a homelike air that to him was almost uncanny.

He found his mind traveling back to the States and he thought of his stepsister's home, which he had not seen in ten years, and, with a real avuncular tenderness, of her twin baby girls who by now must be great young misses with pinafores and flaxen pigtails. Harding stared down toward the foot of the hill below them, where the yards and shops and offices of the railroad were a jumble of indeterminate shadows, speckled with red and green and white lights. His gaze traveled across the heavy line of darkness beyond that marked the course of the river, and past the farther bank, where the gloom was pricked in a thousand places by the lights of the little city of Sta. Rita. He made a prolonged survey of the prospect and suddenly he sighed.

Out of the night, magnified by the intense stillness, arose a harsh clanking and grinding as a locomotive slid out of the roundhouse at the end of the yard. Then came a crash of couplings as she backed against a train of loaded flat cars, echoed by a metallic crunching as the jolt spread from car to car; after a minute of silence, a sudden babble of voices, the sight of a white light bobbing up and down, and then, in a dissonant chorus, the groaning and creaking and rattling of machinery, quickly silenced by the deep, heavy panting of the engine as she settled to her work. The nightly supply train was on its way to the front, bearing munitions for another day's fight against the jungle.

At the first clank from the roundhouse Harding's momentary lapse into sentiment was over and his mind slipped back on the job like a bolt in its groove.

The three on the porch listened to the steady beat of the engine as the train whirled off into the darkness. Presently, as she struck the long grade which lay a mile beyond the town, the measure changed, slackened, grew slower and slower until the listeners seemed actually to feel the tremendous effort she was making to climb over the summit. Half a dozen short, quick pants broke the steady sequence.

"Slipping," said Curtis.

Harding nodded. Carol noted that he was sitting erect, drumming nervously with his fingers on the arm of his wicker chair in time with the heart-beats of the engine.

The locomotive settled down again to the slow, steady panting gait, slipped again, started again, and then, just as the beats had grown so far apart that it seemed after every one that she had stopped, they quickened and presently became a sharp, steady drumming which grew constantly fainter.

"She got over," said Curtis.

Harding relaxed in his chair.

"Yes, she always does—just."

Carol Curtis laughed.

"Isn't that the way with everything

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here? It does get over. So why worry?"

"It took me over a month to wheedle the money from the directors to reduce that grade," said Harding gravely.

"That's how the train gets over," put in Ned with pride. "Incidentally we have saved twice the amount of the improvement in operating costs."

"I know," said Carol seriously. "But you did it, Mr. Harding. Haven't you always managed to be a match for everything that must be met here—stupid financing as well as engineering and executive problems and rains and fevers?"

"If I didn't think so, I suppose I wouldn't be here," he admitted as if speaking to himself. Then he smiled. "Ned, if you talked as freely about our respected directors, even to me, as your sister does, how long do you think your job would last?"

"Long enough for you to make out my time check," was the response.

"You're right," said Harding with a chuckle.

They were silent for a little while.

"Perhaps we come to take our little job too seriously, Miss Curtis," he remarked. "You see, railroad building in this part of the world is not only a fight against nature but against time. South America is a graveyard of half-built railroads that perished because of lack of money and time. There's always that specter lurking ahead of you. Here we have the rainy season close at hand, which may tie us up completely. And in the Fall it will be a race to get things in shape for our first freights before bankruptcy overtakes us. If we can start hauling to the seaboard the wealth of the country—that means manganese and mahogany and sugar and coffee, you know—before the cash gives out, the promoters will make their fortunes, but if the cash fails first——"

He broke off with a gesture of his clenched hands.

"Well, anyway, it's worth while," he said after a pause, apparently addressing the night.

"Yes, it is," said Carol quickly. "Every rail and tie you put down gives the country a little boost up out of its medieval barbarism."

"It does," conceded Harding. "Though sometimes when you're dealing with lying, thieving tie contractors, or blackmailing native officials, or a lazy, mutinous track gang, it's hard to see it." He stopped and took a long pull at his cigar. "Sometimes I wonder why we stick at it. I suppose it's because the work is worth while." He smiled, as if at his own philosophizing. "Go down to the shops and tell Andy McHenry, the master mechanic, that you've got to cut his pay ten dollars a month, but he's doing a grand work civilizing a backward country. What do you think he'll say? Or any of the other boys?"

"Just the same, I'll wager they feel it," affirmed Carol stoutly. "And it counts."

"Ned," said Harding. "What are you working for on this job?"

"My monthly pay envelope," replied the young man promptly.

Carol laughed. She knew her brother would have worked his hands off for John Harding in any land, under any conditions, for any pay.

"You see, Miss Curtis," said Harding. "Come along down to the office with me and earn your keep, Ned. I'm sorry, Miss Curtis, but there really is work to be done tonight. You'll forgive us for running off?"

"Certainly," said Carol, smiling, "as long as I know you're merely doing it for the sake of your monthly pay envelope. I suppose you were thinking of the envelope when you sat up in your chair a few minutes ago and drummed out every beat of that climbing engine with your fingers—as if you were putting more power in it."

"Did I?" cried Harding, astonished.

"Yes," said Carol. "And I think the real danger to this job is that the superintendent of construction may think so avariciously of his pay envelope that he will overwork and be laid up."

Harding laughed confidently.

"If I can overwork myself, it's time I was scrapped."

III

THE widening of the cuts was a big piece of emergency work, the accomplishment of which necessitated a complete readjustment of the intricate and nicely balanced organization of the railroad construction force. The details were seemingly infinite.

There were a thousand chances for errors in planning which would prove costly or even fatal in the case of a reconstruction that must be accomplished within a month. But the machine which Harding controlled

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was of his own building; he knew the strength of every cog, the work done each day by every part of the whole, where the machinery failed to function properly; and his was the skill, with the least effort, to dismantle and reassemble and change the direction of its activity.

He was at his office at dawn drawing up plans for the new work. By noon he had the job completely mapped out.

After lunch he called in his principal assistant engineer. This functionary was a new man, sent down from the New York office—for, though the job was young, one incumbent already had succumbed to fever and the dissipations of Sta. Rita. The newcomer was a long, lean man, with shifty brown eyes. From the first, Harding had felt an instinctive distrust of him, but the man had shown himself a competent engineer.

"Turner," said Harding. "We have four weeks to widen every cut in the line to a one-to-one slope. Get 'em staked out. Here's a list to begin on."

"That's a lot of work to be done with my present force, Mr. Harding. I'll need more men."

"Put 'em on," said Harding.

"But I mean instrument men, surveyors —not laborers." Turner's voice was upraised in troubled protest.

"All right. Put 'em on."

Turner stared at his chief in amazement.

"Where will I find them in this country, on the spur of the moment?"

Harding shrugged his shoulders.

"If you can't find any you'd better work those you have a little harder," he remarked with an air of closing the discussion.

Turner went out, a sadly perturbed man. He had come from a government-managed, eight-hours-a-day, Saturday-half-holiday job, and the change to Harding's methods was startling. Turner resented both the imposition of work and Harding's matter-of-fact manner. As long as he remained in the room with his superior his expression was perfectly respectful, but as soon as he passed the door this changed, and Bill Healy, the foreman of excavation, who brushed past him coming in, was astonished at the malevolent scowl on Turner's face, which boded ill for somebody.

Harding and Healy were John and Bill to each other, because twenty years before Harding had commenced his construction career as timekeeper of an excavation camp commanded by Healy. Healy had taught the youngster the rudiments of the craft, from how to cure sick mules to how to quell a mutiny without shooting.

Since then, Healy had more than once worked under his former pupil. More than once, also, had Harding discharged him for drunkenness, because personal attachments and the good of the service occupied separate and unconnected compartments in Harding's brain. The superintendent of construction attributed his rise above his former preceptor to the education which he had received and Healy had missed. But Healy scoffed at such an explanation.

"Education!" he would snort indignantly. "I know as much as John any day. But John keeps sober, and I get soused. John saves his money, and I blow mine in. John can afford to wait for a good job, while I get fired and have to take what I can get."

"Bill," announced Harding, when the foreman came stamping in with an aroma of mules and mud. "We're going to widen all the cuts."

"That's a confounded good thing, John," was the reply. "I told you they wouldn't stand up when it starts raining."

"Don't you suppose I knew that anyhow?" said Harding without heat.

"Well, what do you want me to do, John?"

"It's this way," answered Harding. "We'll start with the section gangs——"

Detail by detail he went over the whole plan, with an occasional word of comment from the foreman. When he finished he handed Healy two typewritten sheets.

"It's all on them," he said. "What do you think of it?"

The foreman pushed his hat on the back of his head with a gnarled, stubby hand.

"It looks to me, John," he announced, "like you'd arranged for every one to be in four places at once and work thirty-six hours a day."

"Well, can we do it?"

Healy sniffed contemptuously.

"What in blazes are we getting paid for? Of course we can do it."

"We'll start Friday then," said Harding, dismissing him.

Half an hour later a boy brought a cablegram into the room. Curtis decoded it and

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laid it with the translation on his chief's desk.

"Replying to your cablegram," Harding read, "impossible to provide funds for purpose asked."

For fifteen minutes Harding sat silently in his chair, save that from time to time he drummed idly on the desk with his fingertips. A clerk from the accountant's office brought in a sheaf of papers for his signature. He signed his name mechanically a dozen times, handed the papers back, and the clerk went out.

Then he spoke to Curtis.

"Give me the code-book, Ned. '

The book was placed before him. He wrote the cable address of the New York office, copied out of the volume a single word and added his name.

"Send this," he said. And, presently, "Write letters to Turner and Healy to hold up work on those cuts."

Curtis put the letters, already prepared, before him, and Harding signed them. Next he started to write a letter himself, thought better of it, and called to Curtis to take the dictation.

Mr. Charles A. Hemingway, President Sta. Rita and Northern Railroad, New York. I herewith confirm my cablegram sent you this day as follows: 'Hemingway, New York, I resign—Harding.' I shall continue to perform my duties until you make arrangements for my successor, which I trust will be at the earliest possible moment. '

With a gesture he signified that was all and dismissed Curtis to his machine, while he sat back for a minute plunged in thought. He recalled the beginnings of the job, the assembling of the whole machinery of construction, human and inanimate, the troubles that had gathered almost from the start, the curiously unsympathetic attitude of the home office, and now this final catastrophe. He had stuck at his work because —as Miss Curtis had said—it was good. But now he could not bear to stand by helpless and see it ruined. If the New York office insisted upon entangling the enterprise inextricably in failure, he must simply get out.

He wheeled impatiently toward Curtis.

"Got that letter yet?"

Ned turned hastily aside and blew his nose with violence.

"I—I—a minute," he stammered, and began beating furiously upon the typewriter.

IV

AT FIVE o'clock in the morning when the mist lying heavy on the river had just begun to turn from gray to white and the last stars still flickered feebly in the gray sky, a light gasoline inspection-car slid out of the Sta. Rita terminal, its wheels ringing merrily on the track and its body swaying and heaving from the low joints and surface-bent rails which abounded on the new road.

On the front seat, running the car, sat Harding, and beside him, his open note-book on his knee, was Curtis. To the younger man this last inspection trip over the line with his chief was sad almost to tragedy.

But if Harding had any such feeling he did not show it. His whole mind was seemingly concentrated in watching the line as it slid past under his feet. Rails, ties, fastenings, ditches, culverts, not a detail escaped his keenly appraising eye. From time to time he would jerk out a few words of specific criticism, which Curtis would jot down in his note-book.

After a few miles the car, emerging from a long, deep cut, rolled out on the embankment which was the approach to the Rio Jacinto. Here Harding slowed down and presently came to a stop. In front of them lay the wide river-bed, dry, except for a narrow deeply scored channel, through which purled a little stream of clear water.

Spanning the thousand-foot gap was an immense wooden bridge; no flimsy, temporary affair of perishable pine, but a stupendous, stoutly built network of huge timbers, so heavy that they would not float in water, and so hard that they would turn the point of a steel spike, all interlaced and braced together, and rising tier above tier, until the apex of the intricately interwoven structure carried the two slender ribbons of steel at a good sixty feet above the river-bed.

Harding gazed out over the bridge. Almost beneath his feet, half way down the steep bank, was the clump of *guasimas* that marked the spot where Jim Mullins had been killed by a falling derrick a year before. Poor Jim, foul-mouthed, kind-hearted and competent, he had built many bridges for Harding in many countries, but this, the biggest he had ever begun, had killed him before he had it fairly started.

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Then, because he could find no other foreman who could handle the job, Harding himself had taken charge and finished the bridge. Nor had Jim Mullins been the only sacrifice; both fever and accident had taken toll of the workers. But Harding had put it up. There stood the bridge, and the trains ran over it every day.

"It's some bridge, isn't it?" said Harding, more to himself than to the man at his side.

Curtis cast a quick, inquiring glance at his chief. There had been a strange note in his voice. But Harding's face was impassive. He said impatiently:

"Confounded carelessness. Look at the loose bolts in that angle-iron. Make a note of it, and remind me when we meet the section gang."

Harding threw in the clutch, and the car started forward.

Soon they reached the edge of the area of cultivated land which lay about Sta. Rita, and plunged into the forest. Now it was as if they were running through a deep cut, shut in by solid walls of green, formed of trees, vines and bushes matted together in an impenetrable mass, the whole set in a soil that was an untapped mine of riches.

From time to time a break in these walls would reveal a little clearing with rough palm shacks, from which naked children ran out to see them flash past; and then they could hear in the forest the ringing sound of ax and machete, and smell the smoke of burning brush. These things marked the advance skirmishes with the wilderness. They foreshadowed its eventual subjection, which was made possible by the twin strips of steel under their wheels.

"There's a lot of good timber in there, Ned," remarked Harding.

"Yes, sir."

"And after they get it cleared, all they have to do is scratch the soil to grow most anything in the world."

"Yes, sir."

"And think of the population it will support and the freight this road will haul, if only——"

He broke off sharply, and the car sprang forward with a jerk as he opened the throttle wide.

AT NOON they came to the track camp, a half-dozen box-cars on a siding, housing foremen, time-keepers, engineers and the rest of the officers of the army of the pick and shovel and spike-maul, and a nondescript collection of shacks and tents where dwelt the rank and file.

It was the advance base of the attack on the jungle. Here arrived the nightly supply-train, from here went out every morning a train-load of rails and ties, and a motley gang of many-hued laborers; and each morning the train would run over the rails and ties which had been its burden the day before; and from here went out long lines of pack-mules carrying picks and shovels, axes, dynamite, bacon, beans, cases and bags and boxes of every conceivable thing needed by the men strung thirty miles ahead, cutting a way for the track through jungle and earth and rock. Also there was a box-car fitted as a hospital, a doctor, and, a little way back in the jungle, a burying-ground.

Harding and Curtis went to the foremen's mess tent. As they approached, a raw-boned man with burnt yellow mustache and little blue eyes, deep-set between a brick-red cheek and forehead, was declaiming loudly.

"Mebbe there's rottener bacon than this stuff they're sendin' us out now, and mebbe there ain't, but they'd have to hunt to find it. That ain't the only bum stuff neither, I tell ye."

"Shut up," interrupted his neighbor. "Here's the old man."

The tirade stopped as promptly as if the speaker's tongue had been suddenly cut off, a calamity of which there might have been some danger but for the dull edges of the table-knives.

"Hello, boys," said Harding, and turned to the brick-faced man. "How much track did you lay yesterday?" he asked him.

"Thirty-seven hundred and fifty feet—and four thousand the day before."

Harding grinned.

"Bust yourself," he said genially. "Say what you like about the bacon. Only, just the same, you know it's the best we can buy."

"Sure I do," grunted the man cheerfully.

A place was made at the table for Harding and Curtis. As the meal progressed Harding joined in the talk. No one deferred to him, few of them addressed him as 'sir,' but when, after they had finished he raised his voice, they were all silent.

"Boys," he said, "we've got to speed 'er up a bit. The rainy season's coming on

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soon and it will be hard to do much then, so we've got to hump ourselves while the weather's good. She's been going all right, but she's got to go faster."

There was no coherent answer. Some of the men nodded their heads. A few mumbled words signifying their comprehension or their desire to conform to his wishes, but there was no general acclamation, no business of "Hear—hear—the chief calls on us, we're his faithful followers." Your railroad rough-neck does not indulge in that.

Down at the end of the table, a youthful time-keeper, a newcomer, said half under his breath:

"My Lord! Ain't we working hard enough now?"

The boss mule-skinner—official title, Superintendent of Pack Mule Service—who sat next him, kicked him under the table with a viciousness which prevented further remarks. Later the young man was led aside and spoken to.

"Son," said the mule-skinner, "if you're going to stay on a job the old man is bossing you've got to learn what real work is. There ain't no union hours when John's running the show!"

"But we don't get any extra pay for working overtime, do we?" asked the young man defiantly.

"No. But you get fired if you don't."

The youth was persistent.

"I don't see why some of you fellows don't kick. He couldn't fire the lot of us."

The mule-skinner stared incredulously.

"Kick!" he ejaculated. "Kick!" And he completed his opinion with a volley of scornful profanity.

Meanwhile Harding and his secretary had mounted mules and had pushed on beyond the rail-head, where the line of the road was merely a long, irregular scar through hill and jungle. Before the sun set they were fifteen miles beyond the track camp. All the way it was the same story: rough men, rough manners, rough words, but always *work*. Harding, with sparing commendation, approved what had been done, but said "work harder."

They had supper at the camp of a gang which was putting in a bridge that was a smaller copy of the one they had crossed in the morning. Afterwards, Harding dictated the first pages of the comprehensive statement of the condition and progress of the work, which he meant to turn over to his successor. One by one the lights were extinguished in the camp until the lamp in the little shack where Harding paced to and fro in the darkness dictating steadily shone like a single star in the blackness of the night. Not until shortly before twelve did he pause and glance dubiously at the boy nodding and blinking over his notebook.

"Tired, Ned?" he asked.

"No, sir. Not yet," answered Curtis stoutly.

"But soon, eh?" Harding laughed. "Let's go to bed."

They ate breakfast by lamplight in the morning, and by sunrise were in the saddle again. That night they made a camp far ahead of the construction work, the farthest outpost of the road, where the location outfit, working with transit and level and ax and machete, was groping its way through the jungle, leaving behind a line of stakes along which, in due course, the construction gangs would lay their ties and rails. Wainwright, the chief of this remote party, was a man Harding had known since he was a boy. He told Wainwright of his approaching departure.

"After I go," he said, "I want all of you fellows to do just as well for the next man as you have for me."

"All right, sir," was the answer. "But just the same, Mr. Harding—" Wainwright hesitated, shuffling a roll of blueprints in his hands—"you know we all sort of look on this as your railroad, and it can't be quite the same with anybody else."

"Nonsense," said Harding.

As he spoke, a dusty, bedraggled messenger rode in on a mule from the nearest construction camp, a day's journey toward Sta. Rita, and handed Harding a strip of paper with a string of cryptic words written on it. He explained that the message was a cable, delivered by telephone from Sta. Rita.

Curtis rushed off to his saddle-bags for the code-book and, taking the paper from Harding, sat down on a stump to translate it, while Harding went over some topographical details with Wainwright, who stood in a drooping attitude, staring morosely at the ground. After the first few words Curtis's fingers trembled as they flipped over the pages of the book. Presently he handed the translated message to Harding.

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Referring your last cable but one, importance of work not thoroughly comprehended. Funds now available for cuts. We earnestly request you to reconsider and withdraw resignation.

"Thank God," breathed Harding softly; and for the first time Curtis had a glimpse of the strain his chief had been under.

Wainwright's gloom was dissipated suddenly, and he looked up with a broad grin.

"Hurrah!" he cried, his eyes shining.

Harding folded the copy of the cablegram and placed it in his wallet.

"Now about that compound curve at Station 215," he began, addressing Wainwright in a matter-of-fact tone.

On the return journey late in the afternoon of the second day, they came on a narrow pass between high hills where for half a mile the right of way of the Sta. Rita and Northern ran side by side with the tracks of the Central of Veragua. Harding, who was in high spirits, had been talking more than was his wont, and now he touched on the relations between the two roads, a matter which had not been the least of his problems.

"I've never been able to understand the hostility of those fellows, Ned," he remarked. "Each road will be a feeder, rather than a competitor of the other, for they run at right angles and neither taps the other's country. Yet, you know how they try to block us at every turn."

"We beat them fairly in the courts when they tried to block our right of way through here," suggested Ned.

"Yes, but they keep after us, though apparently it's flat against their own interests. I wish I knew what's behind it all." He rode on for a space and then exclaimed sharply, "Hello, what's this?"

Straight across their line a stout barbed-wire fence had been planted which extended from side to side of the defile, save for a gap where it crossed the tracks of the Central of Veragua. This opening had been filled with a cattle-guard which effectually prevented the passage of animals.

Harding pulled up his mule and gazed frowningly at the obstruction for a moment. Then, without a word, he dismounted, took the machete he carried at his saddle and hacked through the strands of wire where they crossed one of the posts. When he had made an opening in the fence, they led their animals through.

"That seems a silly trick, Mr. Harding," said Curtis. "They can't stop a railroad by putting up a flimsy wire fence."

Harding remounted and took another survey of the fence before he replied. His face was anxious.

"Unless I'm mistaken this means trouble, Ned," he said. "They've probably been rigging some wires in Sta. Rita that won't be so easy to cut."

V

THE significance of the barbed-wire fence was made apparent almost as soon as Harding got back to headquarters. Half way down the pile of letters and papers that had accumulated on his desk during his absence, he came upon a big gold-sealed official document. The Spanish in which it was written was so prolix and circumlocutory that at first Harding was about to toss it aside for a more thorough perusal later. Then his eye was caught by a phrase, and he read it through slowly and carefully.

The paper was signed by the *Juzgado de Primera Instancia* of the Province of Sta. Rita, and recited that it had been brought to his notice that the case of the Central Railroad of Veragua against the Sta. Rita and Northern, wherein the former had sought to restrain the latter from running dangerously close to its tracks in the locality known as the Alta de los Cedros, had been decided on erroneous evidence. The judge therefore decreed that the case be reopened and, pending its final settlement, the Sta. Rita and Northern be restrained from any activity in the nature of constructing its line in the mentioned location.

Cutting through the fence, it appeared, had been very far from the end of the matter.

Harding took the one practical course to get at the bottom of this move of his adversary. He went to see the judge.

Antonio Saez y Ribeire was of the Veraguan aristocracy, the small body of men who by dint of superior education, inherited wealth and position, and an intimate knowledge of the mental processes of their ignorant compatriots, ruled the republic as absolutely as any feudal autocracy, and with perhaps less beneficent results. While their power was absolute, their responsibility was not openly visible but concealed behind the machinery of supposedly liberal institutions.

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Don Antonio had taken his degree at Harvard and studied the civil law in Paris. He had written poetry of more than local fame, and had contributed to Spanish-American literature a notable volume on the aspirations of the Latin races of the continent and the most practical steps toward their realization, which he opined were no other than the ardent cultivation of industrial honesty and efficiency, and the discarding of personal politics with all its resultant trickery and chicanery. At the time the Sta. Rita road was first projected, he did much to quiet the fears of his Yankee-hating fellow citizens by assurances of the lasting economic benefits which such an investment of foreign capital would being to the country. In short, he was a man of culture, scholarship and good sense.

When Harding was announced at his office, Don Antonio jumped quickly to his feet and met him at the door.

"My dear Mr. Harding, how good of you to come!" He clasped Harding's big fist in his long, slender fingers and impelled him to a chair. "Sit down. Sit down. It's a great honor to me that a man of such great and multitudinous affairs as yourself finds time to drop in at my quiet study."

Harding sat down, a little dismayed by the warmth of the greeting, and Don Antonio chattered on:

"And how goes the work? Splendidly, I hear. Splendidly. Little annoyances here and there, but of no consequence. The great work that is to bring this poor country of ours into the twentieth century marches on. It is——"

He paused for a word, and Harding interrupted.

"What about that injunction, Don Antonio? That is what is stopping its march just now."

The judge resented Harding's brusk manner as much as he objected to the subject itself. He had been about to deliver a well-turned epigram, when the American's rude interruption had robbed him of that intellectual enjoyment. However, as became a man of polish, he let no hint of his resentment show through his affability.

"Injunction?" he said blankly. And then: "Ah, yes. That trifle. It's really too bad. But then the law is the law, you know, and in its unreason it sometimes forces us into corners from which we can not escape. But that injunction of course is a very minor affair. Your line, I understand, only runs through the Alta for half a mile."

"But if we change that half-mile we'll have to change a good many miles each side of it," answered Harding with vigor.

The judge knew that as well as Harding, but replied with a polite "Indeed?" giving the word a mildly interrogative inflection. His face was quite serious; indeed, he appeared genuinely concerned over the matter.

"What was the evidence we presented which was found to be erroneous?" asked Harding.

The judge threw up his carefully manicured white hands in protest.

"My dear Mr. Harding! The law, you know!"

He went on to explain that he had no sanction to disclose the facts of the other side's case until the matter was brought up for adjudication at the final hearing, pointing his remarks with many scholarly explanations of points of procedure involved, and learned references to the differences between the civil law and Anglo-Saxon law. Again, Harding ruffled his feelings by an interruption.

"And the final hearing—when may we expect it?"

"Ah, that is hard to say. The proceeding is complicated, of course."

"So it will be a long time? They can make it a long time?"

"Possibly, yes." Don Antonio spread his hand out in deprecation.

"And meantime we are not to know in what respect our evidence was wrong—are to have no chance to rectify it?"

The judge stroked his long silky beard and meditated.

"There might be some way, though I doubt it. I will read the matter up. Still, frankly, I fear I may have to disappoint you." He pushed back his chair impatiently. "Bah, these beastly affairs of law and business coming up between good friends like ourselves! How ridiculous it is, is it not? Come, let us forget them. Do you know that Harvard, which is my *alma mater* as well as yours, sends a crew to Henley this year? Do you think we can win?"

Harding suffered the talk to be led away from the business in hand, but all the time they were chatting of college athletics he sought diligently to discover the undercurrent which he felt rather than saw. Then it came to the surface. From athletics the

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judge led the talk to young men, from young men in general to his own son.

"I have been thinking lately of getting him a position—some sort of outdoor work," said the judge with a certain expectant tone in his voice.

"Yes?"

The judge made his meaning more clear.

"Your sort of work, for instance."

"Ah, I see," said Harding. "Yes, I can give him a job," he added. But that, he thought, isn't promising not to fire him in a week. "Say ninety a month."

The judge drummed his fingers on the table.

"Jaime has very exaggerated ideas," he said. "I fear—I know he would not take a position for less than—" He was about to put the figure at one hundred and fifty, but remembered his ruined epigram and said instead, "Two hundred a month."

Harding sat back in his chair and grasped its arms tightly.

"The highway robber!" he thought. "All right," he said at last, with such bad grace that the other could not refrain from smiling. But he only smiled for an instant, for Harding's next words were, to a man of breeding, almost insulting.

"And now," the American was saying, "suppose you tell me about that evidence of ours which was wrong."

Harding was sadly in error, of course. The etiquette of the affair was for him to leave with expressions of esteem and no further reference to the matter. Then, after a time, when the price had slipped into the background of both gentlemen's memories, he might return and receive the information he had bought.

"What barbarians these Americans are!" the judge thought. But he said: "My dear Mr. Harding! I shall first have to consider, as I told you, and see if I have any legal justification for such action."

"And I shall have to consider about that job for your son," said Harding. "I want to find out that business now, not next week."

The judge who could, when necessity demanded, disregard his finer sensibilities, told him.

It seemed that in the affidavit filed by the Sta. Rita and Northern, the distance between their projected line and the track of the Central of Veragua was stated as ninety meters. It now appeared, from measurements made by the engineers of the latter road, that the distance would in fact be only ninety feet.

The mistake was clearly no more than a clerical error in the affidavit and was quite unimportant, for as Harding pointed out to the judge, ninety feet was ample distance. But Don Antonio, though agreeing, said that the mere fact of the error entitled the Central to another hearing and, pending it, the Sta. Rita and Northern could not lay its tracks over the disputed location.

"But you will be able to speed up this business and set the hearing for an early date, at least, won't you?" asked Harding.

"I shall do my best," answered Don Antonio, "but naturally one may expect delays." He lingered slightly on the word "may." Then he added: "But, on the other hand, things may move swiftly and satisfactorily."

He leaned back in his chair as if to denote that the last word on the subject had been spoken, and then said:

"By the way, Mr. Harding, my boy Jaime has been getting himself in debt, I fear. I wonder if you would arrange an advance of two or three months' salary." He looked at Harding keenly, tapping the ends of his fingers lightly together and smiling slightly.

FOR a few seconds Harding struggled with a great anger and loathing that tempted him to spring at the creature's throat. But in the end it was only his cold blue eyes that caught Don Antonio's and held them as in a vise.

"So you want some of the bribe in advance?" he said.

Don Antonio dropped his eyes.

"My dear Mr. Harding!" he exclaimed in shocked tones. "Obviously you do not understand me."

Harding stood up, and his broad figure towered over the fragile judge.

"If the people of this country understood you as well as I do," he said, "I hope they'd have spirit enough to drag you off the bench and hang you to a lamp-post. I won't pay your son's debts. I won't employ him. I'd rather fight you than bribe you. And I will fight. I'll fight this crooked case, and I'll fight the crooked judge—to the limit—and in the end I'll break you if I can."

At the first blast of Harding's declaration

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Don Antonio flinched ever so slightly, but he quickly recovered his composure. His face whitened, an exceedingly nasty expression came into his eyes, but he seemed quite unconcerned, as he answered:

"Very well, Mr. Harding. But if, in the course of events, you change your mind——"

Harding was already passing out of the door with a curt "Good morning."

As soon as his visitor left, the judge's self-control departed. His hands trembled, his lips twitched, tears welled up in his dark eyes. He sank back in his chair and, hastily selecting some note-paper, began to write. But presently he desisted. "Letters are dangerous," he said, and tore the writing into little pieces.

Then he got up and went to the window in time to catch a glimpse of Harding's broad figure disappearing around the corner.

"Stupid Yankee pig!" he whispered vehemently. "We have you——"

He made a slow prehensile movement with his well-manicured fingers.

VI

WHEN Harding got back to his office, he set about tracing the responsibility for the mistake in the affidavit which had been the pretext for bringing on the trouble.

The office copies of the statement, as originally prepared in English, and its Spanish translation, were produced. True enough, the words "ninety feet" in the former were translated to read "ninety meters" in the latter. At the bottom of both original and translation was written "O. K—H. Turner."

Harding sent for Turner.

The engineer came in briskly, almost aggressively, and planted himself in a chair by Harding's desk, shoulders squared back, chin stuck forward. Harding kept him waiting a moment while he answered a call on his telephone, and Turner saw the documents on the desk. He squared his shoulders back a little more.

"Now this affidavit about the location of our line through the Alta de los Cedros," Harding began.

"Yes, sir," put in Turner crisply.

"You put your O. K. to it, I see."

"Yes, sir."

"Both English and Spanish copies."

"Yes, sir."

Harding paused. He glanced first at the papers in front of him. Then he looked straight into and through Turner's eyes. The engineer returned the gaze for a moment then leaned over to adjust the lacing of his high boots so that his face was concealed from Harding.

"This mistake, Mr. Turner, how did you let it get by you?"

Turner answered hastily and confusedly, for Harding's eyes were still looking into him.

"I don't know, sir, I'm sure. It's lamentable, I know, and careless of me—but can't it be remedied? It's non-essential, after all."

Harding had averted his gaze. Now he whipped it back so suddenly that Turner could feel the sting of it. He slipped forward a little in his chair, then braced himself for the blow he could see coming.

"To which mistake do you refer, Mr. Turner?"

Turner cursed himself for his slowness of wit, and Harding for having caused it with that discomfiting, steel-pointed gaze.

"Why—why," he stammered. "I'm not sure I understand you."

Harding led him.

"You mean the translation of feet into meters, don't you?"

Turner nodded jerkily and then—

"How did you know that mistake was there, Mr. Turner?"

"Going over the papers some time ago, I noticed it," he answered, after an instant's hesitation.

"And you didn't report it to me?"

There seemed to be no suitable answer, so Turner kept still.

Harding no longer troubled himself to look at the man. He said:

"Mr. Wainwright will be in day after tomorrow. You will turn over everything in your office to him. You shall be paid to the end of the month."

"I don't quite understand, sir," said Turner.

"You're fired. Do you understand that?"

Turner did, and without further protest left the office, less aggressively than he entered. He was not, however, completely defeated. Free from the disconcerting power of his chief's eyes, away from the physical dominance which Harding exercised over him, the engineer recovered his resourcefulness. From Harding, he went to the cable office in Sta. Rita.

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Harding meantime took all possible steps to sweep away the obstacle which the Central of Veragua had placed in his way.

His lawyers agreed that, beyond doubt, the injunction restraining the line from being constructed through the Alta pending the final hearing was not properly granted; that it was an action beyond the authority of the judge. But a judge was a judge, and his decisions could only be altered by appeal to a higher. That would involve delay.

"How much delay?" Harding asked. "Who knows? There are many technicalities." They enumerated some of them. "A week, a month, or a year? Tell me approximately, so I may make my plans," he insisted.

"Who can say?" was the reply. "Of course, we shall do our best."

Harding knew that in three weeks the track-laying would reach the Alta.

"If you quash this injunction in two weeks, you get double fees," he announced, "and treble if you do it in a week."

There was an immediate quickening of interest, accompanied by fervent protestation that their own personal gain was the last thing they considered; that they labored unselfishly for the good of the great and beneficent enterprise which was to do so much for the advancement of their country.

Nor were the protests insincere, as they were spoken. Your Latin-American is too perfervid an elocutionist not to be persuaded of the truth of his own words. But because they spring so easily from his mouth, the impress that they make, real as it is, is apt to be fleeting.

Harding made no offer to dispute his attorneys' motives, but trusted that when the dictates of their loftier feelings grew less impelling, the appeal of the dollars would remain in force.

After thus launching the main attack, he prepared the ground for an alternative one by ordering a careful survey of the region of the Alta de los Cedros to ascertain if it would be practicable to build a temporary line around it. If this could be done, it would be possible for the work ahead to go on without interruption, even if he were temporarily restrained from putting his track through the Alta itself.

Next morning brought him a cablegram from Hemingway.

"Am informed you discharged Turner," it ran. "Strongly urge his retention on account his close relations influential stockholders. His dismissal might be disastrous."

Harding read the message through twice, frowning. Turner had received his appointment from the New York office, and Harding had never liked him. He was neither hard-working nor reliable, thus lacking the two qualities which above all others Harding demanded from the men of his organization. His disastrous carelessness in the matter of the affidavit and, still more, his concealment, had been the last straw. And now to have to take the man back and let him think that he had not the power to discharge him was a bitter draft. But Harding was not the type of strong man who can only give hard blows; he could take them as well.

He sent for Turner. The man came in, once more aggressive, an unwholesome look of triumphant craftiness in his face. Those chilled steel eyes of Harding's had no terrors for him now, for he had received a copy of the telegram he saw lying on Harding's desk.

"Mr. Turner," said Harding, not even looking up at him, "I've changed my mind. I'll keep you on."

Turner smiled a little. Harding continued:

"However, I'm going to transfer you. You will go out to the front and take Wainwright's place. He has the work nearly all laid out, and you have only to follow it up. You will also look after the construction district farthest front. Wainwright will come in here."

He had spoken haltingly; the effort it cost him to control his temper robbed his words of decisive emphasis. So Turner was emboldened to protest:

"But, Mr. Harding, I don't want to go to the front, I——"

The look which Harding gave him was like the impact of a blow.

"You will take the material train next Monday night," he said, his face growing white and his lips trembling as he spoke.

He rose slowly to his feet, and Turner had a feeling that the great muscles which lay under his speckless white coat were hard and knotted. He looked toward the door.

"Very well, sir. All right. Of course I didn't mean to object," he mumbled hastily.

Just as the door closed, Harding called sharply after him—

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"One minute!"

Turner came back promptly.

"Yes, sir."

"I want you to watch the pile-driving with particular care. All those *arroyo* bottoms are soft mud and need extra-long piles.

"Yes, sir," he answered, and Harding dismissed him with a nod.

When he had gone Harding sat down heavily, lit a cigarette with shaking fingers, puffed vigorously on it for a few moments, then muttered to himself—

"I'll soon be a nervous wreck if I let every mosquito-bite bother me."

THAT night Harding dined with Curtis and his sister. Though the acquaintanceship was of little duration, Harding already, without consciously so analyzing it, felt it had reached the stage of comfortable, companionable friendship. She was a very good sort to be with. It struck him that she possessed all that sound common sense and mental stability usually denominated as masculine, combined with unmistakably feminine intuition and quickness of wit.

She was a many-sided person, alternating bursts of sparkling vivacity with periods of calm repose which were very soothing to overwrought nerves, and Harding, man of action that he was, did have nerves. Sometimes after periods of tense activity he had them very badly, and he had, too, the trick of deprecatory self-analysis; and worst of all, the habit of worry. Carol Curtis had soon discovered this.

Tonight she knew, as certainly as if he had told her, that something serious had happened. After dinner, without his realizing what had started him, he found himself recounting to her his experience with the judge and then the affair with Turner. And, somehow, whether it was from the mere fact of telling of them or from her clear-headed comments, both matters seemed to become less serious and worrying.

They were sitting on the veranda talking in a desultory, comfortable sort of way when they heard some one on the gravel walk and then a voice at the foot of the steps inquired if Mr. Harding were there.

Harding went down to see who it was. Some one he knew, evidently, for the two greeted each other cordially. Harding called up to the veranda, "Pardon me for a few minutes, please," and the two men sat down on the bottom step to talk.

Their conversation was in Spanish. Carol, listening to it idly, not understanding more than a chance word, presently found herself haunted by a certain familiarity in the strange voice.

Their business was soon finished. Harding's caller stood up, shook hands, and then for some reason seemed loath to go. For a minute he gave Harding the impression that there was something else he wished to speak of. Then, as if for an excuse to linger, he offered Harding a cigarette and took one himself. He struck a match. In the flare, Carol saw his face distinctly.

She jumped up.

"Oh, Mr. Harding!" she called, running toward the steps. "Ask him to wait a minute, please!"

Harding looked up at her, amazed. The man started eagerly at the sound of her voice, and then, as she came down the steps, made her a low bow.

"It is a great pleasure to see you once more, Miss Curtis," he said.

She grew suddenly confused and at a loss what to say, but he was courteously waiting for her to speak, so she stammered out:

"Oh, I'm so glad to see you. I have never thanked you properly and I did so want to."

He smiled and bowed.

"It is for nothing," he said.

"It is for a great deal," she retorted. "Please don't prevent me from thanking you—very sincerely. Though what you did was quite beyond thanks—I shall never forget it."

Again he bowed as he answered, gravely—

"Nor shall I ever forget the pleasure it gave me."

His gray-black eyes were fixed on her unwaveringly. Quite unreasonably she blushed and was furious at herself for doing it.

"Won't you come up and sit down?" she said lamely.

"A thousand thanks, but I must go."

He bent low over her hand and left them.

When he was out of earshot Harding let out a low whistle.

"So he's the man who helped you out that night, is he? Do you know who he is?"

"No," she answered.

"He's the Robin Hood of this country. A boss outlaw who runs all the other outlaws in the business—or finishes them off. He's

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just been in to see me about surrendering a fellow who killed one of our men and fled to him for safety."

"Is he going to surrender him?" asked Carol.

"Says he'll shoot him himself if I'll give my word that the man is guilty," grunted Harding.

"He—" began Carol. Then she broke off. "Shall we go inside?" she said.

VII

NED CURTIS had recently acquired a Jamaican servant who was to Carol a continuous source of joy and irritation. His name was Eustace; in his speech a classic Cambridge accent struggled for mastery with thick-lipped African locution; he looked not unlike an ape. By profession he was a school-teacher, he said, and only engaged in domestic service as a temporary stop-gap. Carol considered that if he received no more than his deserts, it would be a very small gap which he would stop; unless, indeed, he did it with the debris of the china he broke.

One evening Ned brought home with him the letter-press book of Harding's correspondence, saying that he was going to put in an hour or so after dinner bringing the index up to date. Had Carol been a less discerning sister, she would have protested, for the boy put in a great many more hours' work each day than are supposed to be good for any one.

But overwork is relative. If the task is distasteful, too much of it will soon tell, but a nervous breakdown is not apt to come from a labor of love carried through with loyal enthusiasm, and Ned's service for Harding was just that. So, instead of telling him he was working too hard, she offered to help him.

But through the dinner hour she was at great and well-concealed pains to keep his mind detached from everything connected with his daily work. Because their life was after all very limited, and their touch with the outside world was very slight, she fell back on the ever-fruitful ground of domestic details and soon had her brother chuckling with glee over the antics of Eustace, related when that worthy was out of the room. It was a notable *tour de force* on her part, because when those same antics had occurred they had brought her much nearer tears than laughter. But nothing of that aspect of affairs did Carol ever permit to come out. Such trials, petty in their details, far from inconsiderable in their total, were hers and hers only, not to be added to the burden of the men. That she herself stood ever ready to lighten that burden was another matter.

Dinner over, Ned went for the letter-book.

"Where in the world did I put it?" he exclaimed impatiently. "I thought it was on the table here."

"It's sure to be somewhere about," she answered. "What a careless thing it is."

Ned continued to hunt, with many exclamations on his own stupidity and carelessness.

"It would certainly be a sweet thing to lose that book," he said, after a fruitless expedition to his bedroom.

"Is it so very important?" she asked.

"Important! Good Heavens, I should say it was! It's got the copies of all of the old man's correspondence with the New York office. If it should ever come to a point where he had to stand up for his own actions in this everlasting bickering with them; if, say, he were to want to prove that he'd told them this or that and they'd paid no attention, he'd have to have that book."

"I see," said Carol, and began to help him hunt.

It was found before long on the table where Ned had left it, under a newspaper.

Ned always went down to the office before Carol was up, and rarely came back before lunch. But the next morning he appeared while she was at her breakfast, his young face very serious.

"Carol," he said, without waiting to say good morning, "that letter-book's gone."

She stopped eating.

"Tell me about it," she said quietly. "It can't have gone far."

He was clearly in a panic, but her calmness steadied him. Last night he had taken the book to his room with him, he explained, and left it on a table near his bed. He did not remember seeing it when he got up, had not looked for it, in fact. But when, after breakfast, he went to his room to get it, the book was gone. He had hunted all over his room and in the living and dining rooms without finding it. No, he had not told Mr. Harding yet, he said, in answer to a question from her.

"Then don't," she said. "Go back to the

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office and don't worry. I'll find it. It can't have walked away, so it's certain to be here somewhere. You were probably sleepy and forgot where you put it."

Ned went back to the office, doubtful, but somewhat comforted. Carol was a fine girl to have about when anything went wrong, he thought.

Carol finished her breakfast and then made a careful, methodical search for the missing letter-book, with no result. Then she sat down and thought. It must be in the house, unless it had been carried away. It could have been carried away only by some one breaking in during the night.

The windows were fitted with heavy wooden shutters instead of glass, after the native fashion. These were kept open day and night, but stout iron bars across the window-openings made it impossible for an intruder to enter in that way. The two doors, front and back, were both fitted with good spring locks. The cook, who slept at home, had a key to the back door, by which she let herself in when she came in the morning. Eustace, who slept in a detached outhouse, had no key.

Carol called the cook and asked her if she had found both doors securely locked when she came that morning. Oh, indeed she had, was the reply, given so promptly and emphatically that Carol was instantly suspicious. A few sharp questions, and the woman broke down and admitted that she had been leaving her key with Eustace every night so that he might get in and have the fire going for her in the morning. But the front door had been locked when she came, and she knew she had left the back door locked, and Eustace had said nothing about finding it unlocked, as he surely would have done had such been the case.

Carol scolded her roundly for disobeying orders about her key, and then sent her to the market, a mile away, to get some potatoes which she had forgotten to order the day before. Ten minutes after she had gone, Eustace was sent after her to tell her that the mistress had meant to say sweet potatoes.

As soon as the man was well away from the house, Carol went to the little one-room shack where he slept. Subduing her disgust at the task, she hunted through the chest of drawers where he kept his clean clothes, through a heap of dirty ones on the floor and in the bed. She found nothing. She pulled his trunk from under the bed. It was locked, so she sped back to the house and returned with a string of trunk-keys. One of them fitted the lock.

Open, the trunk revealed itself as almost empty, containing only a few odds and ends of clothing. Then, just as she was about to shut it, she was struck by the shallowness of the trunk. She measured from the top to the bottom on the inside, then from the top to the floor on the outside. There was a good three inches' difference.

Hastily, she bundled everything out of the trunk and examined the false bottom. Not a crack or a joint did it show. There seemed to be no way to lift it and find what might be underneath. She got a table knife and ran it all around the edge, hoping to find some concealed slit; she felt over it for a hidden spring; all with no result.

It was nearly time for Eustace to be back and she began to fear that the only thing to be done would be to send for her brother and then seize the trunk and force Eustace to open it. Finally deciding that that was the only way, she closed it and pushed it back under the bed. As she did so, her hand pressed on one of a row of brass nails which studded the outside near the bottom and she felt it move in. She pushed on it again. It sank in flush with the brass band in which it was driven. She tried the other nail-heads and they were all firm. Then she pushed in the one which moved and pulled sideways on the others, and a strip of wood slid out from the side of the trunk underneath the false bottom.

The space was too small for her to reach her hand inside, but she felt about with the crooked handle of an umbrella. In a few seconds she had fished out the letter-book. Swiftly, she closed the opening in the trunk, removed all evidences of her search, and went back to the house.

At first, she was greatly elated at recovering the book and, because she was quite human, she was more than a little pleased at her own cleverness. But, after the first flush of her success had subsided, she began to be appalled by what the affair meant. The stealing of that letter-book was no casual, petty negro theivery, nor was Eustace's possession of such a remarkable trunk a thing to be overlooked.

She recalled Ned's words as to the value of the book to Harding if any disputes should arise. Clearly some one wished to render

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him defenseless if such an event should come to pass, and from that she jumped to the answer to the riddle which had puzzled her. If the Sta. Rita and Northern went on the rocks, it was Harding's reputation which would be sacrificed, not Hemingway's.

She thought of Harding, a man with the body of a prize-fighter, a brain like a marvelous piece of clock-work, and the strength of will to drive both body and brain to their limit of endurance, and beyond; and all this joined to a temperament as nervous and highly strung as any hysterical woman might have. He was driving himself now; had been for many months; and the interplay of will and temperament was wearing down even his magnificent physique. The higher the tension, the more he worried, and so by repercussion forced the tension still higher. If to the load he was already carrying, he were forced to bear with him day by day the knowledge that a cowardly enemy was slinking behind him waiting for a chance to stab him in the back, could he stand it?

Carol resolved to say nothing to Harding. Ned should be told, and every possible precaution taken to prevent any more attempts of the kind. Harding himself, knowing of it, could do no more, she reasoned.

All this Carol thought out in the few minutes before Eustace returned. She was sitting on the front veranda when she saw him crossing the tracks at the foot of the hill. Half way across, he suddenly stopped and turned about, as if he had been called. Turner came out of the station building, and the two met and talked.

A switching engine came along on one of the outer tracks and cut off Carol's view. When she could see them, the white man was patting the negro approvingly on the back and, even at that distance, Carol could see a broad grin making a streak of white across the black of Eustace's simian countenance.

At lunch she delivered the recovered letter-book to her brother, who was vastly relieved, and told him of its finding, at which he was vastly perturbed. His first impulse was to discharge Eustace instantly, and report the matter to Harding. But Carol soon won him to the conclusion she had reached herself. He promised, though with many misgivings, to keep the affair a secret from his chief. It was agreed that he was never to bring to the house any papers whose loss would be of importance; their tongues were to be treble-barred before Eustace; and in the office the most stringent precautions would be taken against thievery of papers or documents or leakage in any form. Nothing was to be said to Eustace. It was improbable that he would soon discover the disappearance of the book from his trunk, and to discharge him might merely mean the sending of another emissary whose disguise they might not be able to penetrate.

Just as they were about to drop the subject, Carol mentioned the meeting between Turner and Eustace.

"What!" exclaimed Ned. "Turner chumming up with a nigger house-boy! Why, Carol, that's the queerest part of the whole business."

The boy's amazement impressed her.

"I suppose I didn't stop to think at the time," she answered, "but I'm inclined to believe you're right." She thought for a few moments and went on. "Ned, don't you think this links up and explains a lot of the unaccountable mishaps and set-backs which have been occurring? Here's Turner who seems to have a strong pull with Hemingway—he gets a special cable sent to reinstate him. Eustace is friendly with Turner, and Eustace steals that letter-book. What does it look like to you?"

"No," he answered. "It can't be. I see what you mean, but it can't be. It's too preposterous. It's probably some dirty work of the Veragua Central."

"I'm not so sure," she replied thoughtfully.

Whatever the explanation might be, Carol felt they were floating on a very small plank in a very stormy sea. She used the "they" instinctively, for she identified herself and her brother with Harding absolutely.

The one possible solution was for Harding to leave. He was under no contract to complete the work and could easily find grounds for resignation which would satisfy even his high sense of honor. He was foot-loose; he had no family to support, and other work would not be long coming. As for Ned and herself, she had a little money of her own and they could easily get along until something else turned up. In all probability, Harding would take Ned with him to whatever job he might go.

That evening, when Harding came over for a smoke and a chat, she brought the subject up.

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"Everything is against you," she said. "Those people you are doing the work for aren't giving you a fair show at all. Don't you think you'd be justified in leaving them? There are plenty of others who would be glad to get you."

For a time Harding was silent. "Yes," he murmured, more to rob his silence of rudeness than as an answer. "Yes——"

He saw two thousand men stretched out through a dank, unhealthy, accursed jungle enduring all its slow terrors—rough, uncouth men who as they worked cursed the land, its people and the luck which had brought them to it, whose dreams were of a saturnalia of debauchery when the job was over; but always they worked.

He saw men stricken with fever; some died and were buried where they had worked, others came out of the rough hospitals, and with unsteady legs and trembling hands went back to work. These men—his men—triumphed, fought the jungle and beat it, left it bound with a thin ribbon of steel. Then followed other men who swept away the jungle completely; farms, villages, churches, school-houses sprang up where it had been.

Carol, sitting silent, felt something of what he saw. Without waiting for his speech, she answered.

"You are right. It's a job to be finished, isn't it?"

That same night she wrote to a cousin of hers who, she knew, had an intimate knowledge of New York financial circles.

"Tell me," she asked, "if you know or can possibly find out who Richard F. Hemingway is? What is his reputation? Is he to be trusted? Also, what is known or thought about the Sta. Rita and Northern Railway, and are Hemingway and his associates believed to be playing fair with it? It is important for me to know, because Ned is bound up body and soul with the enterprise, and it would be a hard blow to him if it proved to be a failure. Have you ever heard of a civil engineer named Turner, Henry L.? Who is he? Does he run straight?"

VIII

ONE evening, about a fortnight later, Harding sat on the Curtis porch smoking and talking to Carol. Ned was still in the office finishing up some correspondence. He was expected presently with a batch of letters for his chief to sign, and meanwhile Harding found it very pleasant to sit at ease and discuss the progress of the work with Carol, assured that talking shop would not bore her.

Carol had established herself very quickly as a necessary unit of the personnel of the job. Almost every evening that Harding was at leisure he found himself dropping in at Ned's. Also, though he was a man of reserve, he found himself confiding in her a great deal about the work. Sometimes, after he had left her he was astonished at the freedom of his confidences.

"Yes," he answered, in response to a question, "I am beginning to believe we shall win after all—that the work will really be completed in the time. Things have been going smoothly, so smoothly that it looks almost ominous."

"Still worrying, Mr. Harding?" She laughed softly.

"You'll think me a neurasthenic," he admitted.

"You affected me for a while," she confessed. "I got an idea that your Mr. Hemingway wasn't playing straight, that he had some reason for not wishing the road to be finished, and that your local troubles and your New York troubles proceeded, somehow, from the same source."

"I know," he said quickly. "I've thought of that. But why should they——"

"Of course it was absurd," she interrupted. "A silly intuition of mine, which is only worthy of being choked and thrown into the river. Now I'm sure you'll win—unless the 'old man' breaks down from doing twenty-eight hours work a day."

Harding laughed.

"Building a railroad through the tropical jungle isn't a pink tea."

Carol knew, by this time, that it was one of the most strenuous tasks a man can engage in. It was a continuous fight, with the battle lines never drawn twice in the same place; a series of fresh and unexpected problems constantly charging upon one, which must be solved quickly. She knew that the men, the workers, were constantly changing as well as the problems. Known and proven men were continually going, along with the unfit and those who fell by the wayside, and each new man was a problem in himself and at the best must learn the lay of the land, though there was no time to stop and teach

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him. An organization never completely organized was working on a task which changed every day.

Carol realized that Harding was capable of grappling with these things and winning. She believed he was winning. The widening of the cuts was progressing rapidly. Turner, now far away at the front, was performing his work with moderate efficiency, while Wainwright, who had replaced him at headquarters, was a tower of strength, and relieved Harding of much responsibility in details.

To be sure, the lawyers, though incessantly spurred on by Harding, had been unable to clear away the snarl of legal technicalities which had blocked the passage of the Alto de los Cedros. Finally they told him flatly that a thousand dollars placed upon the desk of a certain superior judge would do the business. Harding, with a report from Wainwright in his pocket on the feasibility of building a temporary line around the obstacle, refused. The temporary line was already well under way. It would cost more than the thousand dollars' bribe, but quite aside from the ethics of the matter, Harding knew that thousand would be but the forerunner of increasing demands.

Carol was informed on all these matters. She knew, moreover, that the New York office seemed to have abandoned its obstructionist tactics. Harding's recommendations were approved and his requests acceded to. He had even received from Hemingway congratulatory letters on the way the work was going and a strongly commendatory epistle on a report he had sent containing predictions as to the early settlement and development of the country to be tapped by the new road. Hemingway had begged another more elaborate report, and Harding had sent one filled with his own enthusiasm, which had made joyful the hearts of Hemingway's bond salesmen.

"You haven't had any recent trouble with Hemingway at all, have you?" asked Carol, as they chatted on.

"Only the delay in the current expense money," replied Harding. "That was ten days ago."

"I never thoroughly understood that matter," said Carol.

"Just stupidity, I think," said Harding.

He explained that at the beginning of each month a draft came from the New York office to cover the pay-rolls of the previous month. In between it was the custom to keep a moderate amount on deposit in a Sta. Rita bank to cover current expenses. It appeared that the current expense fund had become exhausted, and when Harding had cabled for more there had been a delay in sending it. Meanwhile, Harding had been compelled to borrow from the local bank. But after two days the money had been cabled down with a long explanation to the effect that Hemingway had been away and no one else had felt he had the power to act.

"Of course, it was merely a stupid accident," said Harding. "But it gave me the shivers, I can tell you. Without money a job of this kind gets snuffed out almost as quickly as a human being without oxygen."

Carol had been looking thoughtful during his recital.

"I wonder," she began slowly, and was silent while Harding relit his cigar and took several puffs.

Then she suggested—

"Today is the first of the month, isn't it?"

"Yes," he replied. "I cabled my requisition this morning. It was seventy thousand dollars for this past month. I'm still waiting for the reply, which is merely a formal permission to draw on the New York office. It should come at any time now."

Instinctively he looked at his watch.

"If they shouldn't—" began Carol.

"Oh, that would be unthinkable," put in Harding, answering her question before it was concluded. "It would smash the whole works in a few days." He puffed restlessly at the cigar for a minute. "Time Ned was getting here."

"I think he's coming now," she said.

"The lamp's still going in the office," he declared, peering down the hill.

"Some one came out," she replied. "See. There, with a lantern. It must be Ned. Why, he's running!"

"Must be something up," said Harding, rising to his feet.

What Ned had was a cablegram. It arrived just as he was finishing his letters. The first of the code words he had translated from memory to "You may draw on us," and the next word, he knew, stood for the amount, so he did not look it up, but passed to some supplementary words not in the usual monthly formula. These meant: "This is the best we can do," and

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as soon as Ned got them he looked up the amount word in a hurry. Instead of $70,000, it was only $20,000. This is what had sent him running up the hill. He knew that nearly the whole amount—$68,000, to be exact—was owing to the men for a month's work actually performed.

Harding kept a tight grip on himself when he read the message. "It may be a mistake," he said. "Better look into it."

"I had the cable company repeat it over the telephone," said Ned.

Harding paced to and fro on the veranda for a few minutes before he spoke again.

"Put this into code," he remarked finally, pausing in his walk. "If we can not pay $68,000 for work already done we shall be declared bankrupt and road seized by Government."

Ned started back to the office to make his translation.

"Shall I take it to the cable office, sir?" he asked.

"No. I want to stroll over for a look at the cable plant myself," said Harding. "Good night, Miss Curtis. Perhaps some of those intuitions of yours were right, after all."

"I hope not," said Carol.

That night before she went to bed she remarked to her brother:

"This looks pretty bad, Ned. We must keep our eyes open and see what we can see."

IX

"FULLY appreciate seriousness of situation. Doing our best. Help coming soon. You must keep off trouble best you can. Full explanation by letter."

That was the answer Harding received after nearly twenty-four hours.

"Hang his letters!" exclaimed Harding, and cabled for the date he might expect more money. To this Hemingway replied:

"Date still uncertain. Doing our best."

"Are you?" thought Harding irritably, but he proceeded without hesitation to do his.

The pay-rolls had been coming in from all the various camps and gangs on the work. It was the business of the accountant's department to check them over and correct any errors of the timekeepers who made them out.

Playing for delay, Harding swamped the entire accountant's force with requests for various sorts of statistical information from the back records. But they had been bred in school, so they cheerfully worked nights in order to get the pay-rolls checked. Thereupon, to the utter amazement of all and the amusement of those who knew him best, Harding issued an order that in the interests of health there should be no more night work. But in spite of this prohibition, the rolls were on Harding's desk ready for his signature by the eighth of the month. Pay-day was normally on the tenth.

Cavendish, the chief accountant, delivered the rolls to Harding. He was a pallid, sandy-haired young man, incorrigibly British, who was more or less the butt of the whole outfit because jokes failed to penetrate his head, devoted as it was to the logic of figures. He was called the human adding machine, and was supposed to be incapable of any initiative outside of marshaling hosts of figures. His short-sighted, spectacled eyes seemed to look on as much of the world as lay outside of the pages of his ledgers as if it were a strange, incomprehensible place, hardly worth studying.

Of course, Cavendish was aware that there was not enough money in the local bank to cover the pay-rolls, and Harding, who knew the young man's discretion could be depended on, told him frankly that no more money could be drawn for a few days, and pay-day would have to be postponed.

Cavendish was silent for an interval, as if trying to realize the violence of this dislocation of his smoothly running fiscal system.

"I say, Mr. Harding," he remarked, "this is a facer, sir. Won't there be a bally row when the men hear of it?"

"They're sure to kick more or less; but it can't be helped," replied Harding. "We've got to postpone it on one pretext or another, and naturally we can't let the real reason out yet. That would start the biggest kind of a panic and possibly a few riots as well."

Cavendish blinked at him doubtfully. "I hope it'll come right, Mr. Harding," he said, and left the room, but in a minute he returned.

"If there's no haste for the rolls, Mr. Harding," he said, "I'll take them for a bit of a go-over, sir. We did the checking so hurriedly they might be a penny out of order here and there."

He departed, carrying the heavy bundle of papers.

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Next morning, with a nervous and distracted air, he reentered the office.

"I've just done an unconscionably stupid and careless thing, Mr. Harding," he began.

"Yes?"

"It'll mean extra work, I'm afraid, sir, and——"

"What was it, man?" demanded Harding impatiently.

"All because of a little blighter fishing in the river, sir," pursued Cavendish soberly. "As I was crosing the bridge this morning, he pulled in a big fish and——"

"See here, Cavendish, I'm pretty busy today."

"Yes, sir. So I stopped to look at him. And then a heavy wagon came plunging upon the bridge and gave me quite a turn. Startling the way a heavy load comes banging across that bridge, Mr. Harding."

Harding tossed up his hands with a gesture of despair.

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, drop it!" he shouted.

"Yes, sir. I did drop it. I was resting them on the hand-rail, Mr. Harding. Dropped 'em all, originals and duplicates, sir. I suppose, in a manner of speaking, I lost my head when the heavy load——"

"Are you talking about the pay-rolls, Cavendish?" demanded Harding, looking up at the accountant with a curious expression.

"Of course, sir. I hope you won't take it hard, but when that heavy——"

"Cavendish, you're a genius!" exclaimed Harding. "Did you have a brick in the package so it would be sure to sink?"

Cavendish blinked at him solemnly.

"A flat-iron, sir," he replied.

Thereupon there was issued an official order reciting that the pay-rolls had been destroyed by an unfortunate accident and directing that all timekeepers prepare fresh rolls. A week's respite had been gained.

Unofficially, the details of the accident were soon bruited about. Cavendish, besides being the object of both scorn and laughter, was reputed to have been drunk when the mishap occurred, which rumor perturbed the young man greatly, as he was a strict teetotaler.

BEFORE the new rolls came in Hemingway's letter of explanation arrived.

He recited the fact, already known to Harding, that the road was being built by the proceeds from current bond sales. To guard against the case of the expenses at any time exceeding the amount on hand from these sales, there was an agreement with the trust company which was the trustee of the bond issue, that it should advance any necessary sums and receive unsold bonds as security for the loan. In short, the trust company was underwriting the enterprise.

"Unfortunately," Hemingway explained, "our arrangement with the Madison Trust is not a formal contract, but a sort of family agreement, depending only on mutual good faith. Because our relations with them are so intimate, we have felt safe in going ahead on this basis. Indeed, a number of the Trust Company men are themselves heavily interested with us, and we have every security that the company will lend all its aid to financing us.

"Now, however, such a stringency in the market has arisen that, with all the good-will in the world, they find themselves unable for the moment to advance us funds. The same stringency has cut down our sale of bonds, so that, in spite of our essentially sound position and the great value of our property, temporarily we are unable to raise sufficient money. We are trusting to your energy, determination and resource to keep things going at that end until we can arrange matters here. We are doing everything possible, and hope very soon to complete arrangements which will clear the situation. We shall cable you the instant we are able to furnish more funds, which we hope may not be later than the twentieth of this month."

The new rolls were in Harding's hands on the fifteenth, and he immediately cabled, asking if he might surely expect money on the twentieth. He added no remarks on the seriousness of the situation, considering that they must surely understand that he was sitting on a powder magazine with a rapidly burning fuse laid to it.

The answer came that the prospects were good, but that there was not yet absolute certainty. Harding then sent Ned on a rapid trip to the front, ostensibly to carry dispatches to Turner, actually to learn what he could of the temper of the men and how they were taking the long delay in getting their pay.

They were trying days. Harding, externally unruffled, held himself to his work.

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Only Ned, dimly, and his sister Carol, vividly, knew of the strain he was under. She suspected, too, the sleepless nights, of which he never spoke, wondered how long his iron physique could stand such grueling punishment, and lamented her own inability to help. But before him she was never anything but cheerful.

And so she did help. The occasional hour's respite he found with her was the thing which turned the scales against a nervous breakdown.

Ned came back and reported that the Americans were making no complaint, except here and there a man who wanted to see pay-day so he could collect overdue poker debts, but the native laborers were grumbling about the injustice of keeping the money from them for so long. As yet there had been no rumors of the company's inability to pay. That would come next, Harding knew, and would precede the explosion by a very short time.

Nor did he have any illusions about the nature of the impending explosion. The mixture of Spanish, Indian and negro blood does not riot with sticks and stones and hard words, but with steel—long, broad-bladed machetes and wicked, slender-bladed knives. And the American foreman with a six-shooter at his hip, fever and quinine in his blood, and the arrogance of his racial dominance in his soul, does not run away. There would be men killed.

The morning after Ned's return, Harding sent for every American at headquarters to come to his office. When they had all been rounded up, enginemen, conductors, mechanics, clerks, engineers, he said:

"Boys, this job is hard up. At present, we've got just enough money to pay off the laborers for last month. And we can't get more for some days. If we don't pay 'em quick there'll be trouble. So I'm going to ask you boys to let last month's pay stand over—not to draw it, when the paymaster goes out." He stopped for an instant. Then he went on. "And I say that to the best of my knowledge and belief there is more coming, and you can be mighty certain none of you will go unpaid if I can help it."

When he stopped speaking there was a shuffling of feet, a moving about and looking one at another. Evidently no one wished to take it on himself to be spokesman. Then Bill Healy shifted a quid of tobacco in his mouth, started to spit on the floor, just restrained himself, and said:

"——! John!"

"Yes," said Harding, "it is."

"No, I don't mean that. Look here, you ain't hollering for your own pay, are you?"

"No," answered Harding.

"And you're staying on the job, ain't you?"

"I am."

"Then I guess we all can do the same," announced Healy.

He turned and glared at the others, challenging any one to contradict him. No one did. There were numerous exclamations of assent, most of them profanely spiced.

Harding gulped, and he, too, covered his feelings with a curse.

"I won't forget it, boys," he said.

Then he cautioned them to say nothing of what he had told them, and they began to shuffle out until Healy alone remained.

"What about the boys out on the line, John?" he asked. "Do you want them to do the same thing?"

"Yes. I'm going to make a trip out ahead of the paymaster and tell them about it."

"It ain't necessary. I'm going out myself tomorrow. I'll fix it at each camp as I go along. And besides, it ain't right for you to have to stand up and ask a favor of some of them fellows."

"Sure you can do it?" asked Harding.

"Don't you worry about that. The boys all know you, and they know you'll see they get a square deal."

So it was arranged. And that night for the first time in three weeks Harding slept soundly.

X

BILL HEALY stamped heavily into Harding's office with an open letter in his hand and a sardonic grin on his face.

"Here, John. Whadd'ye think of this?" he broke out. "Here's old man Gardner of the Veragua Central offering me three hundred to go over and be roadmaster on his old pike." He waved the letter exultantly in Harding's face.

"Well?" said Harding. "Do you mean you'll jump unless I raise your pay to three hundred?"

"D'you think I'm holding you up?"

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roared Healy angrily, and in luridly embroidered language he proceeded to inform Harding that if they had not been friends so long there would be "something doing" at such an insult, which, as things were, he was pleased to take as a joke. Then, becoming serious, he explained his reason for telling Harding of the offer.

"If they're tryin' to get me away, John, they're probably playing the same game with others, and some of the boys might be fools enough to fall for it. Not that we couldn't do without any swab who quits to go to that pike, but it might upset things a bit."

"Much obliged, Bill," said Harding earnestly.

Bill hesitated, rubbed the stubble on his chin with gnarled fingers, seemed about to go, and then spoke.

"What are you going to do about it, John?"

Harding answered impatiently, "What in thunder can I do? I can't stop him writing letters and using the mails to send 'em."

Evidently Healy had been opening the way for the advice he now gave with a grin of anticipatory pleasure.

"John, if I was you, do you know what I'd do? I'd go over there to San Pablo and get a-hold of old man Gardner and say to him: 'Look a-here, Gardner, you leave me and my outfit alone or I'll knock your block off.' And take it from me that'd fix him. There's mighty few men in this world got the nerve to stand up to you, John, face to face, and Gardner ain't one of 'em."

Harding was too deeply touched to laugh.

"There's nothing I'd like to do better, Bill," he answered. "But they have a thing they call the law even down here. Gardner would have me up for threats of assault, and that would end it."

"Just the same, that's my advice," persisted Healy sturdily. He departed just as unceremoniously as he had entered, but he left behind him an impression of faithful, dogged, thick-and-thin loyalty which Harding found infinitely comforting.

"You could do anything with men like that," he thought. Then his mind dwelt for a little on the man's well-meant and utterly impractical suggestion. What a soul-satisfying way it would be of cutting the Gordian knot of their relations with the Veragua Central! Harding found himself twisting and turning it in his mind and surveying it from all angles, then modifying it, rendering it less fanciful. After all, perhaps——

The next moment he was busily engaged making arrangements for a three-day absence, telephoning, dictating short notes, clearing up unfinished matter on his desk, fastening all the threads of the intricate skein he controlled so that they could not be tangled while he was away.

THE following morning he went on his car to the end of the track, thence by mule to the Alto de los Cedros, and there, turning aside, made for the nearest station on the Veragua Central. Late the same afternoon he was in San Pablo, the seaboard terminus of that road. There he went to the Union Club, the gathering-place of the native aristocracy and all the foreigners of importance, and telephoned the General Manager of the Veragua Central.

Would Mr. Gardner dine with him that night at the Club?

Mr. Gardner was audibly astounded, doubtful of the propriety of accepting the invitation, but too much taken by surprise to have a plausible excuse for refusing. So he accepted.

Mr. Gardner arrived. He was a big, broad-shouldered, direct-eyed man, not unlike Harding in the impression of strength he gave. Indeed the two of them together were a notable pair. They had both come through the same school, fought the same fight, and advanced to be captains, but captains of men.

Do not confuse them with those we call captains of industry, those men who, sitting quietly ensconced in comfortable offices, marshal their vast armies of stocks and bonds; men to whom a new railroad means only a new issue of green paper. To Harding and Gardner it meant thousands of toiling, sweating men, fever, accident, bad living and hard work, incessant endeavor against ever-changing difficulties; then, when the fight was won, to the man in the mahogany-furnished office, with his stocks and bonds, the greater part of the reward.

Harding and Gardner shook hands with a show of cordiality. They had met before and neither of them was a man to let business differences make him pettily rude to an opponent.

Gardner introduced Mr. Lassigny, a

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keen-faced little man of native blood, of whom Harding had heard as playing a considerable part in shaping the policy of the Veragua Central, though he held no important office. Mr. Lassigny greeted Harding with warmth, though not too effusively; he had learned that Americans do not care for that sort of thing. He sat down with them on the broad Club veranda overlooking the plaza, joined them in a cocktail and then unobtrusively drifted away.

At dinner the conversation of the two men was non-committal and general. They talked shop occasionally, to be sure. Men absorbed in the same interest can hardly escape that, but it was talk not pointed by or referring to the relations of their enterprises. Harding described a new form of trestle bridge he was putting in, and Gardner responded with facts and figures as to the life of wooden bridges on his own line.

By the time dinner was over the influence of their common interests and their similarity in point of view, in character even, had drawn them together appreciably. Differences were overlooked. Each knew the other for one of his own kind. They seemed friendly, almost intimate.

As they sat over their cigars Harding judged the time propitious. He said:

"Your road and ours run at right angles to each other for most of their distance. When we begin to operate we'll feed a lot of traffic to you, just as you will to us."

He paused to see the effect of his words.

Gardner shifted in his chair, tapped his fingers, blew out a cloud of smoke, and Harding felt the curtain roll down between them. He hesitated, baffled, not knowing how to go on. Gardner was an essentially reasonable man. What lay back of his sudden unreason?

Gardner said:

"Oh, yes, possibly. That's as it may be. Everything's uncertain in this outlandish country."

He looked out over the plaza at the throngs of young men and girls circling about the band stand. Clearly he wished to drop the subject. But Harding persisted.

"Don't you see it's bound to be so?" he said. "Suppose there were a single road running east and west across New York, don't you suppose it would be helped a lot if some one ran a north and south road that crossed it in the center?" Harding labored to keep impatience out of his voice. It seemed inconceivable that the other should contradict such an apparent truth.

Gardner replied:

"Frankly—" his voice hesitated for a split second on that word—"I can't admit your argument. I'm sorry, but I can't admit it." His iteration somehow conveyed a suggestion that he felt himself on the defensive. And he was plainly anxious to end the discussion.

Harding went on:

"Still, I feel that way, that we are going to help each other, and I think you will be bound to see it before long. So I've come over to say to you: 'Let's stop fighting. It helps no one.'" He paused. "And to say, too, that though so far I've tried to keep the peace, and have only acted on the defensive, if the fight goes on I'm going to strike out, and hard too."

Gardner was a long time in making an answer. Then he said:

"It's a shame! But we're against each other and that's all there is to it. No one regrets it more than I."

And Harding was more than ever baffled and mystified, for those last words rang with absolute sincerity.

From an inside room Lassigny slid up, suave, low-voiced, slightly oily. The subject was changed and presently Gardner left. Harding, worn out by a hard day's travel, was ready to go to bed. Lassigny suggested a drink, and when Harding refused, became so politely insistent that Harding, to get rid of him, consented.

They went into the bar and Lassigny mixed a special decoction, which he proudly claimed as his own invention, a compound composed principally of the native rum.

Harding knew it for a powerful, heady draft the minute he tasted it, and was for leaving half his glass. Lassigny laughingly insisted on drinking bottoms up. Already exhilarated by what he had taken, quite sure both of his ability to finish it and to stand whatever Lassigny could, Harding drained the glass.

With a few minutes Harding realized with a feeling of disgust that he was getting drunk. It perplexed what reason there was remaining to him. The drink had been a heavy one, but hardly enough to produce such a result.

Lassigny meantime was watching him carefully, both for visible effect and suspicion as to the cause. The former he soon

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saw, but not the latter. The device of making the drugged drink so strong that it might conceivably have had the effect of itself, had deceived Harding completely. Harding's utterance was becoming slurred, the movements of his hand were uncertain, and the contest of his dying will with the drug had brought the sweat out on his forehead.

"Mus' go to bed," he said stiffly. "'Fraid felt that drink a li'l."

"Where are you sleeping?" asked Lassigny.

"Hotel." Harding avoided every unnecessary word. "Bag here—go hotel now—get room."

Lassigny went to the front step and whistled for a cab. Then finding Harding's bag he helped him in and got in himself. He was very solicitous, deeply regretting what had occurred, and not understanding it at all.

"There must be some irregularity of digestion which lets it take hold in such a way," he suggested.

Harding made no answer. His pride still remained and he had no fancy for making an exhibition of himself with drunken mutterings.

Before they reached the hotel Lassigny suddenly started up.

"I say!" he exclaimed. "It would hardly do for you to go in the hotel just now—do you think? To go up to the office and engage a room? No. Hardly."

Harding grunted. "'S'right."

"Don't you think it best to drive about for a time until the wretched thing wears off? It's still early."

Harding did think so. "'S'right," he repeated.

They drove about endlessly, it seemed to Harding. He soon lost all track of distance and direction and then of time. They stopped in front of a little *cantina* or drinking-place in the poor quarter of the city. Lassigny went inside and returned with a big cup of black coffee.

"The best thing in the world to clear up your head," he said.

Harding gulped it down, and his senses were so benumbed that he did not taste the fiery native spirits which had been mixed with the coffee.

A few minutes later the last shreds of his will departed. Of his consciousness there still remained a small measure. He had a dim realization, as if he were watching some other person, of driving with Lassigny to many places; of going down narrow, filthy alleys, of knocking at doors of hovels, where like as not they would be inspected through a peep-hole before being admitted; of rubbing elbows with shifty-eyed men and strident, bold-eyed women, a vile spawn hatched out in the filth of their dung-heap.

Sometimes a drink of raw, fiery brandy or rum would be given him and his sluggish body would be kicked into momentary activity. He talked with the creatures as though he were on their plane; in one place he danced to a drum and a hollow gourd played by two leering, besotted negroes. The woman with whom he danced told him he was drunk. He admitted it. She asked for a kiss, since he could not dance.

He cursed her and Lassigny got him away just in time to avoid a fight.

The next morning, while Harding still lay in bed with aching head and weary, hot-skinned body, Lassigny, in immaculate white duck, shaved, powdered, faintly perfumed, was telling the great joke to one and all.

John Harding, the Puritan, the Saint Anthony, the supposed embodiment of all the virtues, who is constantly preaching to the young men in his employ that they hold themselves above the degenerate ways of this country—this same John Harding, gentlemen, slips away from his work in Sta. Rita and comes over here to go on a spree. And such a spree—Ave Maria! The little man spread his hand protestingly up to heaven as if to call for words fitly to describe such an epochal debauch.

"And how do I know? Ah, gentlemen," he smiled knowingly. "It seems San Pablo is unexplored ground, so he needs a guide. I being handy, he honors me with that position. Not knowing where his tastes lead him, I consent. Afterward for the sake of saving him from trouble I remain with him.

"But such places—*por todos los santos!* That Yankee has a strong stomach. Most of us like our little amusements with a discreet amount of gilding, at least the appearance of refinement. But that man—he will have none of such—nothing but the strongest meat for him.

"Gentlemen, I blush to tell you where he went. Ask Carlos Fonseca, the coachman."

With slight variation the amusing tale was repeated many times by the affable

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Lassigny. To set at rest any doubts, Carlos Fonseca was interrogated by many of his hearers, and presently through devious channels the confirmation of the underworld was added. The story was undoubtedly true, and among a wide circle was considered a brilliant "scoop" for Señor Lassigny.

XI

HARDING was compelled to stay in San Pablo all of the day after his much advertised debauch. Connected thought was impossible, as were all the ordinary physical activities of walking, talking and eating. He was no more than an inert lump of physical and mental agony. Of the events of the previous evening he had but the haziest recollection.

His mind was too turgid to reason the matter out. But when he made shift to force himself into the hotel dining-room for a late dinner, and met the thinly concealed smiles of the waiters and diners, patchwork scenes of that shameful night came back to him. This atmosphere of half-suppressed derision served to drive home the profound contempt he felt for himself.

Lassigny, in perpetrating his little joke, had builded better than he knew. Harding's sense of his own dominance, his self-reliance and independence, made it impossible for him to shift on to other shoulders the blame for what had happened. He could not comfort himself by saying: "It was Lassigny's fault. He got me into it."

No, it was his own fault absolutely. He had let himself be led. And the fact that he had let such a beast as Lassigny lead him was a further shattering blow to his self-respect.

Under cloudy skies he quitted San Pablo early the following morning. By the time he left the train at Tres Caminos a heavy downpour, the first of the seasonal rains, had set in and the whole country was a cheerless prospect of water and mud. At first he thought of waiting until the storm was over, but the habit of persistence rather than any active desire to go on took him to the *fonda* or inn where he had left his mount, gave tongue to orders for it to be saddled immediately, and put him on the animal's back.

The road was a quagmire, a river of viscous, red-brown slime, walled in on either side by the dense, rank jungle. The mule plodded heavily along with head down and ears flopping, a picture of dejection. It splashed into a pool of liquid mud so deep that Harding had to hold up his feet to keep them out of it. With each step the animal made a greater effort to pull his feet out of the sticky bottom. It grew worse.

The mule plunged, floundered, and then sensibly gave it up and sank on its side. Harding stepped off its back into a foot of muddy water, with an unknown depth of water mud beneath it. He sank in to his waist and only by the greatest effort was he able to wade out to a firmer footing. The mule, relieved of his weight, extricated itself more easily and stood looking at him with a melancholy reproach.

He remounted and rode on. With his surface consciousness he was guiding and steadying the mule as it plunged and struggled over the abominable trail. Beneath that his mind was ever running back to the sordid, filthy scenes of two nights before. There was much he could not remember, but he unsparingly reconstructed the gaps, until it became impossible to differentiate between the scenes which had stuck in his memory and those he imagined.

At last he left the trail and turned into the line of his own railroad. Here the going was no better, for he had to follow the course of fresh excavation. The drenching rain did not slacken. He was already wet and mud-coated to the waist, and now his raincoat began to leak and before long he was drenched and chilled from head to foot. In scrambling down the side of a shallow cut the mule tumbled and fell, flinging Harding off. He landed full length in a puddle, and his nose and mouth and eyes were clogged with slime.

He remounted and rode on. All the time he was thinking, and his thoughts hurt. They were confused, distorted, as unreasonable as the disordered functioning of a brain burning with fever. The only clearly defined note was the vivid self-loathing that ran through them all.

He reached one of his camps, snatched a hasty meal, got a fresh mule and rode on. He came to the rail-head, changed to his gasoline car, and drove over wavy track and mushy road-bed with reckless speed.

All the time it rained as if the heavens were trying to drown all human cheer and joy and comfort in an unceasing flood of

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gray, cold water and bury them in a world-wide morass of mud. And as unceasing and dismal as the rain were Harding's thoughts.

MUD-PLASTERED from head to foot, worn out in mind and body, Harding stepped from his car to the station platform in Sta. Rita. Standing close by with an umbrella and mackintosh she had brought for her brother was Carol Curtis. She had slipped off her own mackintosh, and her simple white dress was fresh and clean; her arms, bare from the elbows, were clean and unstained to the tips of her taper fingers; under the delicate skin of her cheeks softly glowed the blood of clean, vigorous health. Her cool gray eyes looked very clear.

Harding restrained a shudder as she greeted him.

"What a sight!" she exclaimed. "I never saw any one so dirty in my life."

"Yes, I'm pretty bad," he answered, without smiling.

"But we're glad to see you back, anyhow," she said. "We're going to have a good dinner tonight and Ned got some new phonograph records yesterday. You've just time to get yourself cleaned up and come."

"I couldn't possibly," he answered. "I'm too dirty."

"Nonsense," she insisted, "it'll come off. There's lots of soap and water in your house. Come along."

He answered almost curtly:

"No, I'm much too dirty. I'm filthy. Can't you see?"

He left her a little mystified and a little piqued at his abrupt and unreasonable refusal.

He went to his house, stripped off his mud-plastered clothes, bathed, and dressed in fresh clean duck. There persisted a strange, perplexing feeling that he was still muddy.

He sat down to his dinner, and found the food tasteless; worse than that, distasteful. He lit a cigar and the smoke bade fair to nauseate him. He became conscious of aches in his legs and back, his head was spinning and he was acutely conscious of every square inch of skin on his body.

He counted the beats of his pulse for a half minute, then took twenty-five grains of quinine and went to bed.

The fever rose. All night long there passed before his eyes a phantasmagoria of wild debauchery. He saw the bestial faces of drunken negroes playing tom-toms while he danced until his legs were on fire with pain. The face of a woman lit with evil passions leered at him. It came closer until he could feel the hot breath of the creature, and he could not escape because he was held fast by an iron band about his head. It hurt him horribly. He was dirty—coated thick with slime and mud and filth. All decent people shunned him.

Toward morning the fever abated a little and he fell into a more normal sleep. He awoke to see Ned Curtis standing in the room.

"Hello, what brought you here?" he asked him.

"Your man has just been down to our house and told us he thought you were sick. Said he heard you talking all night and feared you had fever."

"I did have a bad night," admitted Harding, "and I'm afraid I'm not quite right yet. I'm going to lay in for today."

At that Curtis, who knew his chief, realized it was no mild attack.

"Carol says if it's really fever she's coming up here to see that you're looked after," he continued. "And we'll get the doctor right off. He'll fix you up in no time."

He started to leave.

"Wait!" called Harding sharply. "Don't get your sister up here. We'll do all right without her."

The boy looked at Harding admiringly. It was just like the old man to refuse to be waited on. He laughed—

"If Carol knows you're sick in bed she'll just naturally come, no matter what I say."

"I'll get up then, hang it," said Harding peevishly.

He sat up, put his feet on the floor, and then became aware that every vestige of strength and power to command his muscles had left him and the room became a darkened vault in which strange lights danced, and Ned's startled face persisted through the darkness like a grotesque mask.

Two days passed during which Harding tossed in the grip of the fever, living over in his delirium the events of that night in San Pablo, while the company doctor labored strenuously to keep down the ever-mounting temperature; two precious days in which the machinery of the road's progress, lacking his guiding hand, lapsed and slipped a cog here and there; in which less faithful

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lieutenants stole away for a day of dissipation in town and their men loafed and gambled and smuggled liquor into the little working colonies.

Strange stories about the old man were whispered along the length of the road and penetrated to the camp where Turner and his location outfit were blazing the trail. Turner was one of the temporary deserters. He declared a holiday and on the evening following Harding's seizure he was seated in a café in Sta. Rita conversing intimately with don Antonio Saez.

The following morning Harding opened his eyes and the first person he saw was Carol, white, cool, immaculate, seated beside his bed, sewing. She did not see him open his eyes and before he spoke he watched her for some time with the weak, wondering gaze of the convalescent. She was very good to look upon, particularly after the loathsome faces and figures that had peopled his delirium.

"Miss Curtis, how long have you been here?" he asked.

She started and looked at him hastily, noting that his glance was clear.

"Oh, I'm so glad!" she cried warmly. And then, after a minute, "You've been sick two days."

"Two days!"

Weak as he was, he rose on his elbow in dismay. He knew what time was worth on that job and the possibilities for disaster in twenty-four hours. The job was characteristically his first thought. But immediately this was succeeded by another. The appalling depravity his ravings must have suggested.

"You've been here?" he repeated.

"The doctor needed some one," she replied, and continued lightly: "Of course, I came. I've always wanted to be a trained nurse anyhow."

His eyes were searching her face, as if for a sign, but she bent again over her sewing.

"Please don't get excited. You must be very quiet, you know," she said.

"Ned?" he asked.

"Oh, he's gone off on the line. There were one or two little things——"

She broke off, smiling brightly to hide from him her knowledge that things had not been going well.

He dropped back on his pillow, breathing heavily.

"You must try to sleep now," she said. "You've given us all quite a scare and now that the fever is broken you must rest."

"I'm going to get up," he said.

"Oh, no, you're not, Mr. Harding," retorted Carol with a smile of assurance.

"You don't understand," he persisted. "There's so much to do. You really must go out now."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Harding," she retorted in exasperatingly cool tones, "but the doctor told me to stay here, so, under the circumstances, I'm afraid you'll have to remain in bed." She spread her sewing—a bit of gay-looking embroidery—out upon her knee and inspected it absorbedly, her head on one side. "Besides," she added, "the doctor took away your clothes."

"What!" exclaimed Harding impatiently. "Why?"

"I think he did it from an intensive study of human nature—your kind," said Carol smiling soberly. "When he carried the things away he muttered 'safety first.' "

Harding grunted impatiently, but Carol looked so naively serious over her sewing that in the end he chuckled.

"You're a fine pair of tyrants," he declared. "How long am I to be a prisoner?"

"The doctor," she replied thoughtfully, "is devoted to his job. You know how that is. So he'll be likely to keep you here as long as he can. Oh, possibly months and months! But I'm very tender-hearted. If you'll drink this," she had got up and now she held some sort of draft in her hand, "and rest for a while, I'll see what I can do to help you."

Already her strong, slender hand was behind his shoulder, helping him up to drink, and the other hand placed the glass to his lips. He took the mixture and lay back comfortably while she took up her sewing. After all, he was not discontented. It was good to rest there, with a young woman sewing in such a domestic attitude close at hand. His body felt as if he had just come from a hundred-mile ride over the roughest of mountain trails. It did not want to get up.

So he lay there and lazily watched Carol and hoped that she would look at him and speak. But she was wholly absorbed in her sewing apparently, though the minute he dropped asleep her eyes shifted from her sewing to him and she stared at him for some time, studying his unshaven countenance

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with a tenderness that was quite maternal.

It was almost the middle of the afternoon when Harding woke up again and his eyes turned immediately to Carol's chair. He felt a little pang of disappointment at seeing only the doctor.

This time Harding felt much refreshed and his temperature was normal. The doctor, who realized the terrific drain on his vitality, was astounded at his reserve of strength. Harding demanded his clothes and declared, if they were not immediately forthcoming, he would have the doctor arrested for larceny and cut off his appointment as head physician to the road.

Doctor Welsh, a jolly Irishman who had seen service in the British Army, retorted that he had exacted the strictest obedience, in his time, from such patients as English generals, Indian princes, man-eating dyaks and members of the British royal family, and he was not going to stand for any insubordination from a roughneck engineer, running a jerkwater railroad in a fourth-rate country; but if Harding wished to risk his rather unimportant life, he could get up for a period not to exceed two and a half hours.

At this Harding started out of bed, when Carol appeared with food she had been preparing for him, and the doctor declared the patient must have some nourishment before he could get up. Indeed, Harding's nostrils sniffed the savor of a little cup of broth she had brought and some crisp, brown toast and he admitted that he was hungry.

"That's a good sign," said the doctor.

After the meal Harding got into his clothes and walked down to his office, astonished at his own physical weakness. As he was about to enter the little brick building, he was amazed to see Turner coming out of the door.

The unexpected appearance of Turner was the first real intimation Harding had that in his absence some of the men might be loafing. The young engineer was tucking some sheets of paper into his pocket. In fact, he had been utilizing Curtis's temporary withdrawal from the office to secure something he had been very anxious to get. He had made what he considered a good job and there was a smile of satisfaction on his face. But this faded rapidly as he caught sight of Harding. He buttoned his coat hastily.

"What are you doing here?" demanded the chief.

"I—you see the rain knocked our work out temporarily, Mr. Harding, so I declared a holiday and came in."

"I declare the holidays on this job."

Turner's eyes evaded the old man's. "I thought it a good opportunity to look into some of the clearing contracts. Besides, we had our work well up."

"When I want you I'll send for you," snapped Harding. "Get back on the job."

"I'll leave the first thing in the morning, sir," said Turner with evident relief.

"You leave on the supply train tonight."

Turner hesitated.

"Very well, sir," he said. Then meeting Harding's eye, he added: "My men are human, you know, Mr. Harding. They want a bit of a spree occasionally as well as—any one."

Harding flushed.

"Go," he said, curtly, and Turner sauntered over toward the station.

Reading between the lines of the reports that awaited his inspection Harding realized how the work had slumped during his absence, and in his soul he cursed that disgraceful night that was the cause of it all. Obviously Turner had heard the story. Probably all his subordinates were aware of it.

After glancing hastily through his mail, he began calling up on the telephone the various construction camps, principally for the moral effect, to show that he was back on the job. Several of the men he asked for were not to be found. They had slipped the shackles of work for a day of loafing or a spree in Sta. Rita. It was evident that the spirit of perseverance and devotion had been sapped. The morale of the whole force had been impaired, and he himself was to blame.

But the worst blow came when Ned returned late in the afternoon from his trip out on the road.

"I've wanted you," said Harding irritably. "Where have you been?"

"Williams had an accident with the pile-driver, Mr. Harding," replied Ned. "I couldn't locate Turner, so I thought I'd best look into it."

"I told Turner to look after that job," said Harding. "Serious?"

"I'm afraid so," replied Ned.

It seemed that Williams, who was a

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faithful worker, but not competent enough as foreman to be trusted on his own initiative, had attempted to get across an *arroyo* with fourteen-foot piles instead of the twenty-foot timbers Harding had told Turner to use. The result was that the heavy machine came over a bent of piles too short to hold in the soft ground and its weight had sunk them in until the angle had become so great that the driver slipped off and toppled into the river. The engine had fallen on some jagged boulders and been badly smashed.

"I knew Williams wasn't up to managing that work," snapped Harding. "If Turner had been on the job—" He recalled why Turner had slipped off to loaf, and he fell silent. "Have Wainwright go out there," he said. "Is the engine badly smashed?"

"Yes, it was a big drop for such a whale of a machine. They're trying to pry her out of the mud, but both engine and driver are only junk now."

"That's bad—very bad. We can't make a whole pile-driving outfit and there isn't time to get one from the States." A little fit of giddiness gripped Harding, and he passed his hand across his forehead. "Take some letters," he said weakly.

But at that minute Carol Curtis came in.

"Time's up, Mr. Harding," she said. "Back to bed."

Harding resented the intrusion.

"I can't go now, Miss Curtis," he said curtly. "There are too many serious things to attend to. The work is in a slump. We've smashed a pile-driver that we can't possibly replace. There's the deuce to pay and it's no time for sentiment.

"What smashed the pile-driver?" she asked quickly.

"Disobedience to orders." He fingered a letter impatiently and glanced toward the door.

Carol, flushing, sat down.

"This is no time for sentiment, Mr. Harding," she said. "You are under orders—the doctor's orders—and if I can help it I'm not going to let you disobey them and smash yourself. You see, that would result in my brother being out of a job. Will you come back to the house now?"

"Carol!" gasped Ned in dismay. He had never before seen any one who dared to contradict and give orders to John Harding.

Harding fingered his letters nervously. Another wave of weakness swept over him. When it passed he turned to Carol with a wry smile.

"She's right, Ned," he said. "I'll be good."

He turned abruptly from his desk and followed the girl meekly from the room. Going up the hill to his house he was glad to have Ned's shoulder to lean on.

XII

THE center of Sta. Rita, topographical, social and political, was the Parque de Doce de Mayo, the Park of the Twelfth of May, named in honor of the date upon which the former Spanish province had proclaimed itself the free and independent republic of Veragua and promulgated the first of its two dozen or more constitutions. The park was a trim, well-kept little square, planted with a profusion of tropical shrubs and trees, through which ran graveled walks encircling the gingerbread bandstand in the center.

Fronting the park were the principal buildings of the city, the Cathedral, the Governor's palace, the *Ayuntimiento* or Town Hall, the Grand Hotel de Sta. Rita, two clubs and the Café Gardenia. Architecturally these buildings formed a cosmopolitan hodgepodge. The Cathedral was Gothic, the palace Spanish, the Town Hall grotesquely Oriental and the hotel a great Colonial barn.

The Café Gardenia was crowded on Sunday night. At the spindle-legged, marble-top tables were half of the aristocracy of the town, a voluble, gesticulating throng, the men slender, dapper, black-mustached, except for here and there a smooth-faced youth or some elder who used his razor to show his Anglophile tendencies; the women powdered, visibly rouged and very perceptibly perfumed, with clothes smacking of Paris at a year's distance.

Somehow these people, most of whom were shallow, petty and with little education, few of whom had ever been outside their own medieval environment, whose conversation rarely rose above the merest trivialities of their narrow, every-day lives, managed to present to the casual eye a picture of brilliant gaiety; their blended platitudes fell on the ear as the witty and fascinating talk of a spirited assemblage. Nor was this specious brilliance the ebullience of

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alcohol. Most of them took ices or coffee or sipped long, harmless *refrescos*.

In a corner, at a table by himself, sat a man who in that dainty throng looked oddly misplaced, as if he might be more at home on the deck of a ship or the back of a horse or in the cab of a locomotive. He wore his immaculate white clothes awkwardly; in fact his thick frame appeared about to burst them and his shaggy black beard and unruly mop of hair were incongruous among those delicately barbered men.

In that gathering he seemed a stranger, yet Carlos Iriquidi had visited Sta. Rita twice before and each visit had preceded a change in the government of the province. Iriquidi's eyes kept roving about furtively. From time to time he glanced at his watch. Finally he got up and stood just outside the doorway, in the shadow of a tree-trunk. His glance traveled across to the park and finally rested on a figure of a man who sat alone on a bench, the brim of his sombrero almost hiding his face. Iriquidi crossed the roadway and passed close to this man, then turned again and made for a narrow side street. With a casual air the man on the bench got up and followed. Out of the shadowy spaces two other men slipped quietly after him.

The dark way twisted between the flat, inhospitable walls of houses whose prison aspect was accentuated by their ponderous doors and heavily barred windows. Except for a single swain pressed close against the window-bars courting his unseen adored one incarcerated within, the street was deserted.

Iriquidi's footfalls rang sharply on the rough cobblestones, as, drawing farther away from the lights behind him, he quickened his steps. Here and there he passed places where his nostrils told him the householders had been using the street as a dumping ground for slops and refuse. Behind him he heard other footfalls, but he did not turn.

The street ended abruptly in a wall marking one wing of a house that even in the obscurity of the night was much more pretentious than the ordinary. Here Iriquidi knocked at a door which was opened instantly. After a word with some one inside he stood in the dark passageway waiting until the figure of the man who was following him appeared.

"This way, Don Enrique," called Iriquidi in a grating whisper.

Without a word the other entered and a servant led them along the passage. The two men that had come after Enrique had melted into the shadows.

"*Los señores*," announced the servant, flinging open a door. They stood on the threshold of a long, high-ceilinged room. In the center was a table holding a single reading-lamp the rays of which glittered feebly on the gilt legs and backs of chairs ranged in formal rows. The corners of the room were lost in darkness.

In the bright circle of light thrown by the lamp was the finely modeled head of Judge Don Antonio Saez. With an expression of keen intellectual pleasure on his aquiline features he was writing the opening paragraph of an essay, the title of which he had blocked out in bold letters at the top of the page: "Practical and Theoretical Suggestions for the Economic Regeneration of Veragua." With this treatise the judge hoped to win the annual literary prize of the Academy of Veragua.

On hearing the voice of his servant he pushed the paper quickly aside and sprang up to greet his visitors.

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" he exclaimed. "How glad I am to see you! Enter. Seat yourselves. Here you are in your own house. All is at your disposition."

They took the chairs Don Antonio pulled up for them out of the darkness and he reseated himself at the table. They conversed for some minutes pleasantly and pointlessly. Or, rather, the judge and Iriquidi conversed.

Enrique sat silent and motionless, erect in his chair, replying in inexpressive monosyllables whenever either of the others addressed him. Finally came a little pause. Then Iriquidi leaned confidentially toward Don Antonio and subduing his great voice to a monstrous whisper, said—

"Well, we are ready?"

"Money?" The judge's voice lingered on the word.

"We have it. Sufficient for the present, and the promise of more."

"And the arms?"

"Some," replied Iriquide. "And above all, better than a thousand rifles, our friend here."

He bowed toward Enrique. The veins on his bull neck stood out with his efforts to achieve a whisper. His face was flushed and wet with the struggle to repress himself within the conspiratorial rôle.

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Fuentes lit a match, touched it to the cigarette he held in his lips, and blew out a cloud of smoke.

"I'm ready any time," he remarked casually.

The judge leaned back in his chair so that his face came into the shadow. His glance rested for an instant on the title of the essay at which he had been working.

"It's a serious matter," he said. "With difficulty can I persuade myself that it is the best thing for our country."

Iriquidi nearly strangled himself in his efforts to subdue his voice.

"Too late to go back," he croaked.

The judge sighed.

"You had assurances at the capital."

"I have made practically certain that the Central Government will not interfere, that they will treat the affair as a provincial squabble and for one reason or another will move no more troops into the province. Those now here we can easily dispose of."

Iriquidi, glancing furtively about the room, thrust his face suddenly toward the judge's. His voice had the tearing harshness of escaping steam.

"You are provincial governor in a week —confirmed by the President the next. He will not dare do otherwise."

Once more the judge's eyes rested fondly on the title of his essay.

"I know, I know," he said softly. "But it is a bad system, this government by insurrection. It is this same thing—personal politics—that has always been the curse of our country."

Iriquidi ignored the interruption. Without relaxing his profound conspiratorial attitude, he went gasping on:

"And, as you know, Don Antonio, the governor of Sta. Rita Province today is easily president of the republic tomorrow. Then Veragua becomes the model state of which you have so long dreamed."

A gleam shone and faded in the judge's eyes. He raised his hand with a deprecating gesture. For a minute he sat in thought, tapping his slender fingers gently on the table.

"Well, well, let us go forward then," he finally remarked resignedly. "Of course it will be best if I do not appear to be identified with the movement at first."

Through all this dialogue Fuentes had been sitting like a statue. Now he leaned forward quickly.

"Why remain under cover?" he said.

"My influence will be greater," explained the judge suavely. "Let the uprising proceed. When it has gathered such force as to be a real menace to the government, I shall step in and, because of my impartial position and the power it gives me, we shall be able to control the situation."

"The way to control the situation is to drive the government troops out of Sta. Rita," said Fuentes sharply.

THE judge proceeded further to justify his position, addressing Fuentes and Iriquidi in turn in polished periods, with his best judicial manner. He was glad when Enrique removed his glance and sat back in his chair again, motionless, staring at the air.

"There is one thing more," whispered Iriquidi portentously when the judge's explanations had purred themselves out. "We must have an issue. A rallying-cry. Enrique, here, with his band of rough and readies—the spearhead of the revolution—he will need no mouth-filling phrase to unite his men. But for the others, the farmers and *peones*, we must have something more striking than merely 'Down with the Government!' "

"Why not make it 'cut the taxes in half'?" asked Enrique suddenly with a dry laugh. "The people are crushed beneath the burden of them."

The judge frowned.

"Hardly," he answered. "We might be forced to keep to our promises. Then, with a depleted treasury, the game would not be worth — government administration would be difficult."

Iriquidi grinned:

"We'd buy no châteaux in France that way. You're right, Don Antonio."

A shadow flitted across Enrique's face. He seemed about to speak, but sat back quickly while his countenance resumed its inscrutable expression.

"I have thought of this matter of a phrase," continued the judge. He paused a minute, regarding the two men in turn, his head cocked a little on one side like the head of a malicious bird. "How is this? 'Down with the *Vanquis!* Revoke the obnoxious railway charter sold to them by a corrupt government!' " He paused inquiringly. "That ought to stir them, no?"

"Splendid!" rasped Iriquidi.

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"It will do," said Fuentes drily. "A railroad should mean prosperity, comfort, schools. But here we have one railroad already and that has brought only the corrupt rule of the rich *haciendados* and the enslavement of the many. Yes, that slogan will do."

Don Antonio was staring at him sharply.

"Ah," he said, "you must read my brochure on Democracy."

Fuentes stood up.

"I want arms and explosives, *señor*," he said. "Not words."

"You shall be helped," said the judge, as he also rose. "So then, *señores*, you to your work. Be assured I shall take care of my end."

Fuentes bowed. He moved toward the door by which they had entered. Iriquidi, pressing close to the judge, hoarsely whispered, "Good night, Señor Gobernador," and followed.

Left alone, Don Antonio sat for a while frowning thoughtfully.

"That man," he whispered to himself finally. "I distrust him. A firebrand. And it is dangerous to play with fire."

Another interval of silence and then he shrugged his shoulders and a sly smile flickered on his face. Governor—President! He thought of the present Governor, an old man, dyspeptic, but so slow to die. And the avarice of the beast. A new railroad should mean good pickings for all, and this fellow, he wanted more than the lion's share. Well, he would get nothing. It would serve him right.

As for the Yankees, pigs like Harding he would have completely in his power. An evil light flared in his eyes as he thought of Harding. The recollection of that ruined epigram flitted batlike through the back of his mind. Of course there were some Yankees who acted reasonably. Something in Don Antonio's nature enabled him to appreciate the quality and purposes of men like Hemingway. He conceded that Hemingway and himself could understand and make allowances and maintain (within reason) good faith.

Governor—President—a millionaire probably, if he did well with the railroad. But what was it that firebrand Fuentes had said about slavery?

Presently Don Antonio pulled himself together and took up his neglected essay. He read over appreciatively what he had written. Then, taking up his pen, he continued:

"The success of a democracy rests on the integrity of its high officials. Political corruption, that cancer in the body politic——"

XIII

TEN years previously Enrique Fuentes had killed a man in a fight which had been of the other's provoking. But the dead man had been the nephew of the governor of the Province and all of Enrique's connections were with the political party out of power. So within the hour young Fuentes had been in the saddle, and because he had many friends among the petty farmers and great *haciendados*, the pursuit had been fruitless.

Shortly thereafter it became apparent in the rural guard headquarters in Sta. Rita that brigandage in the wild and inaccessible back country of the province was distinctly on the wane. The *commandante* congratulated himself; but too soon. Before long it appeared that the operations of the scattered and independent bands and individuals had been checked merely for the purpose of organization and consolidation.

Rumors arrived of the rise and triumph of a redoubtable villain dubbed "*El Chico del Monte*," or briefly "*El Chico*"—The Little One—a title given in jest evidently, for by his greater resource and ruthlessness he subdued and dominated all lesser gentlemen of the road and introduced scientific management into the business of outlawry. The population of the district affected was not entirely displeased, for by paying certain reasonable sums to the managing authorities of the new trust they were securely protected from unauthorized depredations—a security which no payment of government taxes had ever afforded them.

Commendable as this situation was, however, the more or less witty references to it which daily rang in the ears of the government officials soon became unbearably irritating. The first expeditions they sent to bring in El Chico could find neither him nor his men. Others were sent and finally one particularly enterprising squadron of *rurales* found him; the squadron at the time of finding being peacefully asleep two days' march from the place where they believed El Chico was hiding.

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The discovery was attended with great confusion but little fighting. The rank and file of the squadron found themselves deprived of their arms, gazing on some thousands (so they estimated) of El Chico's followers, at the same time that the captain was listening to some emphatic remarks from his old acquaintance Enrique Fuentes.

Enrique gave the captain a message for delivery to the *commandante,* the substance of which was that he wished to be let alone. If not molested, Enrique said, he would guarantee to preserve law and order in the district. But if the *commandante* chose to interfere—well, let him come out himself and see what would happen.

On hearing the message the *commandante* frothed and sputtered, but on the whole he acted on its advice. Certain desultory expeditions there were, undertaken in pursuance of orders from the capital, the itinerary of which, rumor said, was always carefully arranged and communicated to El Chico for his approval. Naturally none of these effected anything.

That had been ten years before. El Chico was still the overlord of the backwoods and still a proscribed outlaw with a price on his head. True, his fame was so great and every accredited guardian of the republic's law and order was so firmly convinced that to accost the outlaw in an unfriendly manner was to die a quick and violent death, that El Chico occasionally ventured to enter the town of Sta. Rita, show himself publicly for a few minutes and return to his own desmesne. But, after all, he might at any time be shot like a dog by any one who had the courage to do it. And ten years of this existence had been wearing on the nerves of even such a man as he; in which is easily found one reason for his willingness to assist in the installation of a new set of authorities.

Other reasons there were too. Enrique's power over his people was not based wholly on fear on their part, nor the threat of force on his. He had acquired through the years of his proscription a deep and comprehending sympathy for the great mass of the people who were held down in poverty and ignorance by the same corrupt, oligarchical government which had put its price on his own head.

In the one small district which he had risen to control he had given these people a square deal. But as one of the leaders of a successful revolution his power would be much broader and he could enforce his own will on the new government; he could demand from it some position for himself which would give him far greater scope to realize his ideals than he had now. And then by giving the people real justice for the first time, he, Enrique Fuentes, would become the more powerful. Real as was his patriotism and sincerely as he loved his down-trodden countrymen, he still had a personal ambition, which, having fed on the position he had won for himself, now sought provender from wider fields.

From Sta. Rita a good macadamized road or *carretera* ran northward for twenty miles. Along this El Chico rode from midnight until almost dawn. Then, just as the star-shot velvet blackness of the sky was turning to an indeterminate gray, and the chill morning mists were gathering over field and jungle, his horse's hoofs ceased to give forth their sharp, gritty clatter and were suddenly muffled. He was off the *carretera,* once more on the soft dirt bridle-trail and back in his own country.

He checked his horse, turned in his saddle and looked back along the road, a shadowy gray streak, faintly discernible in the gloom. The next time he rode that way it would not be with his life hanging only on his quick wit and keen eye, insured against the attack of every casual passer only by his dreaded reputation for instant and ruthless action.

A mile beyond the end of the *carretera* he came to a group of buildings: a dwelling-house, barns, sheds, and a wide flat expanse of concrete, much like a tennis-court, covered with drying coffee-beans. He rode up to the outer gate without dismounting, dropped the two upper bars, stepped his horse over the lower one, and, still in the saddle, rapped on the front door of the dwelling. A sleepy voice within called, asking who it was.

"I," answered Enrique briefly and apparently sufficiently, for quickly the door was opened by a frowsy-headed, heavy-eyed man. Behind him came a boy who stood at the horse's head while Enrique dismounted. The man seemed glad to see him.

"Don Enrique, it is good fortune that brings you here. How goes it? Enter. Rest yourself while I wake up the woman

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and tell her to prepare coffee. You will take coffee, no?"

He was rambling on garrulously when Enrique interrupted him.

"No. I sleep."

The man took him into a bedroom, apologizing for the poorness of the bed. Enrique, looking at the bolts on the window-shutters, muttered—

"It is good."

Thirty seconds after the door had closed behind his host Enrique's boots and spurs were off and he was stretched on the bed, his pistol lying close to his thigh where his hand could reach it without delay, and without giving warning to an intruder. He had slept that way for ten years.

It was noon when Enrique awoke. Within half an hour the two sons of the house had mounted and ridden off into the maze of narrow jungle-walled trails which led through the rough, sparsely settled district to the north.

That night those trails were alive with men on ambling, quiet-footed little horses, all riding in the same direction. Occasionally one would overtake another, or they might meet at some convergence of trails. They would exchange greetings, calling each other *compadres* or *amigos*, and act as if meeting there in the dead of night were the most natural thing in the world. And in the conversation of the slowly swelling groups that rode northward there were many references to "El Chico" or perhaps "Don Enrique," much questioning and speculation too. What was it this time? No one knew. But whatever it was the affair seemed to be of some importance, for every one was in it. Perhaps the *rurales*, after long idleness, had again become venturesome and were coming out where they were not desired—or perhaps—but what matter? El Chico had told them to gather and that sufficed.

Dawn again, and a hundred swarthy, roughly clad men and a hundred rough-looking, tough little horses, scattered about the buildings of a coffee plantation. Strange little men, now playing, joking, going into convulsions of merriment over the most trifling witticisms or the most banal horse-play; again reserved, formal, calling each other *don* this and *don* that, grand cavaliers with bare feet and ragged breeches; or perhaps not grown men at all, but children, with all the unreason and impulsiveness of the young and uninformed, though with a man's brawn and muscle and power to swing a machete or hold a rifle truly.

At sunrise Enrique arrived. There was no forming in line, presenting of arms or other ceremony to greet their chief. They gathered around him, talking excitedly, gesticulating wildly, enquiring eagerly.

"What is it? Is it the *rurales* again? When do we ride?"

Enrique raised his hand and there was instant silence.

"Today we rest."

One man at the outside of the throng called—

"And then where do we go?"

Enrique shot him a look over the heads of the others.

"Where I say," he rapped out.

Night again, and a hundred horsemen riding single file on a dark trail, the man at their head picking the way by feel rather than by sight. Toward morning the trail debouched on what in the faint starlight looked like a broad, level, dirt road, the finished dump of a railroad. The leader turned to the left and led them along it toward a distant flickering light.

XIV

CONSTRUCTION Camp No. 17 of the Sta. Rita & Northern was more than the ordinary excavation or "dirt" camp. By its location destined to be an important station on the new road, it had been chosen as administration headquarters for all the work that lay beyond it.

It had, besides the usual foreman and timekeeper's quarters and commissary shack, a field hospital, a warehouse full of tools and commissaries from which it supplied the line ahead, and a powder-house in which were always stored many hundred pounds of powder and dynamite.

The staff of Camp 17 were sitting down to their supper in the palm-thatched, open-sided eating-shack, when Harding rode into the clearing. He was mud-splashed and unshaven; his mule drooped its head and walked wearily, but the man himself was, as ever, supercharged with physical energy and vitality.

Announcing his intention of spending the night, he sat down and ate with them.

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During the meal they talked shop in all its infinitude of details, from hazarding a prediction of the freight receipts from that section in ten years' time to discussing the sore back of the timekeeper's saddle mule. The latter, it appeared, was caused by a vampire bat.

"You want to keep a night watchman in the corral, Jim," said Harding to the foreman. "You're liable to have all of your stock put out of business."

"Well, I've had a couple of lanterns burning all night to keep the bats away," explained the foreman.

"Not enough," said Harding. "It's worth paying a watchman as well."

So after supper Jim summoned one Pablo Gonzalez and told him that he was promoted from cook's flunky to guardian of the sleep of the mules at an increased rate of pay. Pablo was a combination of avarice, laziness and superstition. Not long since from Spain, this wild jungle was strange to him and at night very fearsome. The corral was a quarter of a mile down the line, some distance beyond the powder-house, which was the last of the camp buildings. It would be very dark and lonely there. He said as much to the foreman, who replied:

"But think of the two dollars, man. Think of 'em. Small chance you'd have to make 'em at any real work."

Pablo's eyes gleamed. Avarice conquered and he shuffled toward the corral, muttering prayers to the saints for protection from the devils which must inhabit such a country.

The camp went to bed.

The foreman, Jim Brady, was awakened by a hysterical man calling to him from the doorway in rapid, high-pitched Spanish:

"Señor! Señor! Save me! They come! They come!"

"What come, you fool?" grunted Brady. He lit a candle. "Go back and keep them bats off them mules," he ordered, when he saw who it was.

"But they come, señor," chattered Pablo. "Ten thousand devils on great horses breathing fire and brimstone, señor."

"What's up, Jim?" called Harding from a cot in the same room.

Pablo, with a fresh auditor, repeated his tale with variations and multiplications.

"Bosh!" snorted Brady.

"Jim, we'd better go down there and see what's scared him," said Harding, pulling on his boots.

The two men went through the silent camp, down to the line of excavation, past the powder-house, and were nearly at the corral when two black forms suddenly bore down on them. Brady flung up his revolver.

"Wait," said Harding sharply. The next instant he chuckled. "It's our own mules, Jim."

Brady laughed shamefacedly.

"The fool must have left the corral gate open," he said.

"Either that or those devils of his opened it. Let's go and find out."

More mules passed them and they heard the rustling of moving bodies in the bushes at each side. Evidently all of the stock was loose. Then, not far ahead, they heard a voice.

"Who's there?" shouted Harding.

The reply was a streak of flame, a sharp report, and a bullet zipping over his head. Both Americans answered the shot instinctively. Brady with all six chambers of his revolver, Harding with only two. As if they had touched a match to a pack of crackers, shooting broke out in front and to both sides of them. Wherever they looked the darkness was stabbed with spurts of fire, the reports were a continuous crackle and the air was full of angry buzzings and whining. After a few seconds a voice called out above the din in sharp, staccato Spanish:

"Stop it, you fools! You'll only shoot one another. Stop it!"

The firing subsided, and the voice called out again—

"This way, all of you."

The sound of men moving through the bushes showed that the order was being obeyed.

"Jim," whispered Harding. "Go back and bring all the boys down here. Those fellows will do nothing for a while. I'll wait here and watch. Bring me a spare rifle if you can. Wait a minute. Send some one up to Eighteen to tell them to come down from there, and telephone back the line for every one you can raise."

There was no need for Brady to go to fetch the other Americans. He met them running toward the sound of the firing.

"What's up?" they demanded breathlessly.

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"Don't know. Hell's broke loose, I guess," he replied. "The old man's back there this side of the corral. Go along till you find him."

In the camp he found the timekeeper mounting guard over the half-dozen native flunkies and mule-skinners. A mutiny had been the first thing in the minds of the Americans and they took care to see that the ranks of the mutineers were not increased.

"Turn 'em loose," ordered Brady. "They'll do no harm. Grab a mule and beat it to Eighteen and bring 'em down."

He went into the office shack to the telephone. The minute he put the receiver to his ear he knew that the wire had been cut.

"They're too blamed thorough!" he ejaculated in disgust. He pulled out his bag to hunt for cartridges.

The corral and the small patch of pasture, or *potrero*, which adjoined it, made an open space of fifty yards' width extending for a hundred feet on each side of the dump. It was on the near side of this open ground that Harding established his line of defense.

His force numbered eight men. Three he posted in the middle of the dump, overturning an iron-bodied mule car for them to lie behind; two more he placed in the edge of the woods, half way between the dump and the right end of the clearing; two more in a corresponding position on the other side, and the remaining man, a young rodman on whose fighting value he put no high estimate, was charged with the duty of watching for any attack from the rear. From what he had heard the leader of the attackers call to his men, Harding felt that nothing more would happen until it grew light enough to distinguish between friend and foe.

What it all meant he could not guess. That it was not a mutiny of his own laborers he felt sure; for no conspiracy could have reached the point of producing an armed and organized attack without his having seen some premonitory symptoms. That the Veragua Central was fighting him thus openly was sheer impossibility.

DAYLIGHT came quickly, and as soon as it was light enough to see a man a score of paces away, a voice called sharply across the clearing:

"Who is chief over there? Let him come forth and we will speak."

From behind the overturned car Harding houted:

"You come over here if you want to talk."

"In the middle," was the answer, and a form could be seen leaving the jungle on the opposite side and advancing across the clearing.

Harding stood up and walked forward.

"I come unarmed," called the man.

Harding unbuckled his revolver belt and threw it behind him.

"All right. So do I," he answered.

When they were within ten paces they recognized each other. Of the two, Fuentes was the more surprised.

"Mr. Harding!" he exclaimed. "I did not know you were out here."

"Well, you see I am," answered Harding grimly. "What's the game? What are you after?"

As the two stood face to face there seemed to be little physical disparity between them. Harding, big, burly, broad-shouldered, overtopping the Veraguan by inches, looked no stronger or more forceful than the slender, trimly built Fuentes, whose gray eyes remained fixed on him unwaveringly. There shot across Harding's mind the words Carol used to describe him, "He reminds one of a finely tempered sword."

There was a short pause while they measured each other. Then Fuentes spoke:

"I wish no harm to you or your men, Mr. Harding. I have come for something which I propose to take away with me."

"And that is?"

"The powder and dynamite you have here."

"Come and get it," said Harding crisply. "But you'll have to fight."

"I have one hundred men with me," answered Enrique gravely. "You may come and count them if you wish."

"I believe you. Bring them along. You'll need them all."

"Mr. Harding," Fuentes protested, "it can end but one way. Fighting against you," he bowed ceremoniously, "there will be many losses; but it can end in only one way. Better that we arrange it peaceably."

"Only by your leaving."

"I intend to take the dynamite."

"Then come on."

"You will let me have it peaceably?"

"No!"

Fuentes looked Harding straight in the

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eye, bowed, turned on his heel and walked back to his own men. Harding returned to his cover.

"Get ready, boys," he called. "They're coming. Pot them as fast as you see them."

El Chico, however, old-school cavalier that he might at times seem to be, was an adept at the art of bush fighting. He waited for what seemed to the Americans an interminable period, so long at any rate that their nerves had plenty of time to get on edge. At last one of the men near Harding, unable longer to stand the strain of waiting for he knew not what, exposed his head and shoulders in order to see better.

Instantly there was a volley from the opposite jungle. The bullets ripped through the air, threw up the ground in little spurts and hit on the iron car box with a loud metallic clanging. The reckless one luckily was unhit, but his withdrawal to complete cover was exceedingly swift. The firing stopped and at the edge of the jungle whence it had come was neither movement nor sound.

Harding slowly and cautiously poked the barrel of his rifle around the edge of his shelter, exposed just enough of his head to permit him to aim, waited a moment and fired. The bullet struck the mark and showed it for what it was, a piece of dead wood, and not a man's head.

Then for a time both sides resorted to tactics which are as old as fighting itself. A man would put up his hat on the end of a stick and when it drew the other side's fire, would try to locate and reply to it. This and a dozen other bush-whacking strategems were resorted to. Occasionally from the bandits would come a rapid, sustained fusillade, meant, seemingly, by the volume of its noise, to force the Americans to leave their cover.

During one of these bursts of fire Brady suddenly dropped his rifle as if it had become red hot and grabbed his left hand with his right. He grunted profanely and turned to Harding.

"Here, John," he requested, "take your knife and fix it for me."

"It" was a little finger which dangled from the hand, attached only by a shred of skin. Harding fixed it and tied up the hand with a rough bandage.

Harding began casting anxious glances behind him. He knew that a few minutes' work with machetes would open a trail through the jungle past either end of the clearing and let the bandits come swarming around behind his men. He made each of his three groups improvise what shelter they could to their rear, so that when the attack came from that direction they would be prepared. The powder-house was a hundred feet away directly behind his own position with the center group. He knew that if El Chico's men were sufficiently determined he could not prevent their reaching it, but he hoped to make the attempt too expensive to be carried through.

Presently one of the men in the right-hand group called to him—

"I can hear some one chopping through the bush over this end."

"See if you can sneak over there under cover and take a shot at 'em," answered Harding.

But on his words a furious fusillade broke out which made it impossible for any of the Americans to move an inch from his shelter without wantonly throwing away his life.

Harding swore at his own stupidity. El Chico spoke English and could understand every word he said.

One of the men in the left-hand group suddenly yelled and exposing himself recklessly emptied his magazine as fast as he could fire. As he settled back Harding could see a big red patch on the shoulder of his white shirt.

The firing subsided to an occasional warning shot, but it was clear that they were being watched for the least movement. Harding began to wonder if they had hit any of the bandits yet.

There was a long wait and then, without any warning, the bandits' fire burst out with renewed fury. The next minute the Americans realized that this was the real attack.

"They're coming, boys!" shouted Jim Brady from his place on the left. "Give it to 'em."

True enough they could see the natives leaving their cover and coming across the clearing. They were not dashing forward openly, but crawling, dodging, ducking, stealing from one favoring hummock to the next.

Now that they could see something to shoot at the Americans exposed themselves fearlessly, firing rapidly and carefully and speeding each bullet with a curse. The result was twofold. Three of the defenders

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were hit, one badly, and the natives for the time stopped coming forward, and lay hugging the ground and keeping up an incessant fire.

Out of the infernal din there came to Harding's ears the sound of a single magazine rifle being fired as fast as the lever could be worked; and it came from behind. He looked around and saw the rodman racing down the dump toward him, and beyond a score of men rushing up to the powder-house.

The rodman threw himself on the ground beside Harding, panting from his run and sobbing and choking with excitement.

"They're — they're — at the powder-house," he stammered. "But I f-f-fixed 'em.

"How?" jerked out Harding.

"Laid a fuse into the back of the house and l-l-lit it."

Harding recoiled as if he had been shot.

Three tons of dynamite and two tons of black powder in that house! Enough to blow into eternity not only the group of natives at its door but Harding and his men as well. He could see nine good Americans dying without even a chance to fight it out fairly. Perhaps, had there been more time, he might have thought of the horror of such slaughterhouse tactics against even his enemies, but the fuse was burning.

XV

AS HARDING sprang to his feet there swam before his eyes the vision of a slender black cord, sputtering and spitting out jets of flame and smoke, and then a blinding, roaring cataclysm. He dropped his rifle and ran straight toward the powder-house. He had covered a dozen paces before the men standing there saw him. When they did they raised their rifles and began firing.

With the report of the first shots Harding felt his hat suddenly blown off his head. Still running, he held forward two empty hands.

A man who had been battering at the door, Enrique himself it was, jumped among the group and began knocking up their rifles and shouting at them. The firing stopped, and Enrique, drawn machete ready to spring, advanced a few paces to meet Harding.

"Quick!" Harding panted as he rushed swiftly by him. "Lighted fuse! Behind the house!"

He plunged through a thicket at the side of the house and forced his way to the back, with Enrique at his heels.

The ground there was uneven and thickly covered with tangled grass and weeds. Harding stopped and looked down. He could see no fuse. He looked for an age—a second perhaps. Then from under a tuft of grass close against the sheet-iron wall he saw a feather of smoke curl lazily upward.

He fell on his knees, pawed about with frantic speed, and jerked out a slender black cord, one end of which sputtered and spit out little jets of flame and smoke. He threw it far behind him and stood up.

Fuentes was facing him, the machete still in his hand; his body was rigid; his face was like the face of a statue; he was pale with the pallor of a man who has gazed on annihilation in one half of a second and regained safety in the next. The machete slipped from his fingers, dropped on the ground and lay there unheeded. He put out his right hand and said:

"Will you do me the honor?"

The hands of the two men met and held each other. From the direction of the corral still came the sound of shooting. Suddenly Fuentes dropped Harding's hand and took a whistle from his pocket. He gave three sharp blasts repeated twice.

Harding heard a scurrying about of men in front of the house and turned to see what it meant. When he turned back again Fuentes had gone. He pushed his way through the bushes and came out on the dump at the front of the house where the bandits had been. They had gone.

There was no more firing at the corral, and Harding walked toward it, to be met by Brady coming back.

"They've beat it," said the foreman. "When they heard that whistle every man of 'em faded away like a bunch of spooks. What's up?"

"They've gone, Jim," answered Harding. "War's over. Tell the boys to come back to camp and we'll have a bandaging bee."

As soon as he had assured himself that none of his men were wounded beyond hope of probable recovery, Harding was in the saddle on his way back to Sta. Rita. He changed to a fresh mule at every camp until he reached the rail-head, and once on the

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track ran his car into headquarters at a reckless speed. His one overpowering anxiety was to discover what lay back of El Chico's raid. That it was a mere sporadic case of outlawry he did not believe. What he did suspect he hesitated to pronounce even to himself. It was the calamity which had always been his bogey, the one thing which might not only disrupt all of the work, but effectually dry up the railroad's sources of money; for no investor cares to send his good dollars into a revolution-rent country.

He reached Sta. Rita early in the evening, snatched a hasty bite at his house, and went over to see Ned Curtis.

Since the hour when Pablo Gonzalez had awakened him that morning, neither the physical nor the mental tension had been for an instant relaxed. Even now, as he walked rapidly along the dark path, he could hear the din of shooting, the angry buzzing of bullets, and the yelling and cursing of his men. He could see Jim Brady's mutilated finger, and the big red splotch on the shoulder of Wilson's shirt. And there came out of the darkness and hung before his eyes pictures of other fights which might come; fights which would be worse than the one of that morning. His fists clenched as he swung along at a quickened pace.

As he came near the Curtis cottage he saw that there was a light on the veranda. Ned and his sister were sitting at a table playing cribbage. Harding stopped a minute and looked through the screening at them; and as he gazed the scenes of fighting and the sound of strife faded away. They looked so restful and comfortable and domestic, so contented and happy with each other.

How well the girl understood how to take care of her brother and make his life pleasant and easy for him. She helped him in his work too, a great deal more than the boy himself could appreciate, and she was always at such pains to keep him from neglecting the little refinements of life that mean so much to an exile and are so easily forgotten. Largely she did it by example. She seemed to have a great many pretty, becoming clothes, and she dressed every evening as if she might be expecting to receive a whole string of beaux. She probably had them, too, at home. Harding wondered.

"Why, Mr. Harding, you made a quick trip," she called as soon as she saw who it was.

With a sudden jerk his mind returned to the object of his visit.

"Yes, I did come back in a hurry," he answered. "Ned, have you tonight's Sta. Rita papers here?"

"Inside, sir. I'll bring them out," answered Ned.

Carol felt that something unusual had happened, but she forebore to ask any questions. Instead she inquired if he had had his dinner. When he replied that he had, she offered him coffee; but did not insist when he refused.

Harding read through the two local newspapers without finding the slightest reference to any uprising. Indeed, he had scarcely expected that he would, for the local journals were too time-serving to print any such news until it became too much a matter of common knowledge to be ignored. But there was a sinister significance in one article, an editorial in the *Independencia*, the more substantial of the two papers, on the subject of the industrial progress of Sta. Rita. Written in polished literary Spanish, it abounded in veiled references and half-concealed innuendo, and was in fact no more than a cleverly cloaked attack on the Sta. Rita Northern Railway Company.

"Hum," mused Harding. "There's just one man in Sta. Rita who can write Spanish like that. You are too clever, Don Antonio." But then he reflected with a certain bitter satisfaction that the thing was so subtle that it would go over the heads of most of the *Independencia's* readers.

"Ned," he said, putting the papers down. "I want you to go down to the quarters and rout out those two native clerks we keep in the auditor's office—Montez and Arias, I mean. Send them over to town to drift about the cafés and find out if there is any particular news or gossip being circulated. And I want you to go to the Hotel Sta. Rita and the club and keep your ears open for the same purpose."

The boy stood up.

"All right, sir." He hesitated. "It would help me to get on the track perhaps if you could give me a tip what you are looking for."

"It may be a revolution, Ned," answered Harding.

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After Ned had left, Carol did not speak for some minutes.

"Do you really think it is that?" she asked at length, much as she might ask if he took two lumps of sugar or one.

"Thoroughbred!" he thought. "There's a possibility, Miss Curtis, I'm sorry to say."

He went on to tell her why he suspected an insurrection. In his relation of the morning's experience he touched very lightly on his part in preventing the blowing up of the powder-house. But she understood it.

She turned to him with sparkling eyes and reached out her hand impulsively.

"I'm not going to say how splendid it was!" she exclaimed. "Mere words are quite useless for that." She was silent a moment. "And that man, Enrique Fuentes? What did he do?"

"Shook hands with me and promptly decamped with all his followers," replied Harding.

"What a man!"

The words involuntarily broke from her lips and with an expression that, ringing strangely on her own ears, instantly awoke in her an apprehension of something she could not understand. To Harding her exclamation gave a sharp pang of something more than anxiety. Had all the romantic fables surrounding the fellow captured the girl's fancy? Impossible. Yet the worst of it was they were not all fables, and he was, when all was said and done, every inch a man. For a moment Enrique seemed to stand between them as a barrier. Unconsciously each of them grew more reserved, and presently the conversation was shifted to unimportant things.

LATE in the evening Ned returned, and in his report there was no comfort.

"The town is alive with rumors, Mr. Harding," he said. "Carlos Iriquidi, you know his reputation, is out in the country calling himself 'General,' and raising recruits. A hundred men are said to have left town this morning. Five *rurales* have been clapped into jail for disaffection."

"And what is it all about?" asked Harding. "What's the object of their insurrection?"

The boy was loath to reply.

"They say," he began. "They say it's about us. Iriquidi is preaching 'Down with the Yankee railroad and the Yankee robbers, and save Veragua for the Veraguans.'"

Carol caught her breath sharply and looked at Harding. His face was impassive, but his hand lying on the arm of the chair was clenched tight shut.

"Go on, tell me everything you heard," he said.

Ned recited rumor after rumor, and as he talked Carol watched Harding's face. The lines in it deepened, it grew almost haggard, but in every line and wrinkle, in the gleam of his eyes, in the set of his square jaw, was the same look of strength and power as in one of the great locomotives of his own railroad.

Ned finished his story. Harding turned to Carol.

"Now, Miss Curtis, may I reconsider and ask you for some coffee for Ned and myself. It'll do cold just as well. You see we'll have to work tonight."

Just as they were starting for the office Harding said—

"Miss Curtis, I'm going to book a room for you on the next steamer, just in case this tempest in a teapot blows into a real storm."

She looked at him steadily.

"Thank you. You and Ned are staying, I suppose."

"Yes, of course."

"Then, so am I." And he knew more certainly than if she had used a wealth of expostulation that those words were final.

That night Harding sent a cable to Hemingway reporting the situation as accurately as was possible from his own information. The answer he received the next afternoon was the one he had expected:

"The situation makes it difficult to obtain money. You must cut down work and reduce force to a minimum. Make every endeavor to safeguard property."

Over the last sentence Harding allowed himself a smile.

"Of course I'd never have thought of that unless he'd told me," he said. The rest of the message was serious enough though.

The reduction of the administrative force of Americans was not an affair lightly to be undertaken, for it meant a break up of the entire organization. The men would leave the country and drift to all parts of the world, and to get them back or replace them with others when the time came to renew operations would be a matter both of time and expense. The question of the day-laborers

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was on another basis. They could be discharged at any time, and there were always plenty more to be hired on short notice. The only thing necessary was to have the money in hand to pay them off.

Harding accordingly replied to Hemingway that he meant to keep his administrative force practically intact and lay off two-thirds of the laborers, and that he needed thirty thousand dollars to do so.

Hemingway answered:

Your course approved. You may draw fifteen thousand dollars next week, and the balance when I advise you.

In half an hour Harding's cable went back:

I need thirty thousand dollars now. The longer you delay, the more I shall need.

To which Hemingway answered:

Situation understood. Money, not this amount, available. Doing our best.

Already rumors had begun to circulate that the road was hard hit by the revolutionary scare, and Harding had scented a certain uneasiness among the laborers. He cabled:

Labor is restless. I must have money promptly to reassure them.

Hemingway replied:

We can not make money. You must hold your men for a while with promises.

These messages were naturally all sent in the Company's secret code, an adaptation of the commercial cable code which required no more than the ordinary code book and key for its transposition, so simple that it was contained on a single typewritten sheet no larger than the sheet Turner had shoved in his pocket the afternoon Harding had caught him playing truant.

The day after the receipt of Hemingway's last message the entire correspondence was published in the *Independencia*, with a note stating that it was an interesting correspondence between the *administrator* of a certain great enterprise and his *Yanqui* capitalist backer. The column was headed, "Promises. A New *Yanqui* Currency."

That issue of the newspaper was distributed free in every construction camp on the line.

XVI

THE bomb thrown by the *Independencia* nearly started a conflagration blazing over the whole extent of the Sta. Rita Northern, and for the next few days Harding and his most trusted lieutenants were up and down the line stamping out the sparks. They threatened, they bullied, they cajoled, but for the most part they dominated through the consciousness of the men themselves that their American bosses had never yet treated them unjustly. They had been ruled with an iron hand, but a hand which had never cheated them. So the threatened blaze, though it did not cease to threaten, only smoldered.

The revolution continued to grow apace. Each day and hour brought its fresh crop of rumors, and it soon became clear that the movement was no flash in the pan, but an uprising which would require all of the Government's efforts to check.

Don Elisondo Figueroa, the governor, had arrived at an age and affluence where the conservation of his health and the already acquired proceeds of his office appealed more strongly to him than the strenuous task of maintaining his position through the hurly-burly of a revolution. As soon as the situation grew serious, his physician recommended the mountain air of his wife's estates in a distant part of the country, and Don Elisondo decamped, leaving the *commandante* of the *rurales* to represent his authority.

Other subtly inflammatory articles appeared in the *Independencia*, and Harding, attributing them to the judge's facile pen, was greatly puzzled, for they were in fact no better than revolutionary propaganda, and Don Antonio was of the government.

But though people be ever so distraught by fears of revolution, riot and imminent ruin, the ordinary processes of human life must go on; we must eat and drink and sleep and shave, or do up our hair until the very moment when the thunderbolt strikes.

And to Carol Curtis a certain daily portion of exercise was as much a physical necessity as eating and sleeping.

Since she had come to Sta. Rita she had rarely missed a day without riding, sometimes with her brother, occasionally with Harding, but more often alone. When the

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revolution began to gather headway and reports of skirmishes came in from the outlying districts, the two men warned her against going beyond the more frequented roads in the immediate vicinity of the station, and though she fretted at the restriction, she saw its reason and complied.

One afternoon she sent for her horse, to be told that it had picked up a nail in its hoof and could not be ridden. So she told the man to bring her brother's instead. It so happened that Harding had the day before assigned to Ned a big American horse which had been sent in from the front because its size as well as its uncertain disposition made it of no use on the rough trails. It was this horse which the man brought to the house.

She was a little taken aback at the appearance of the animal, but partly because she was really a fearless horsewoman, and partly through a certain older-sisterly conceit that she could ride any horse her younger brother could, she mounted and rode off.

The horse went along well enough until she had gone out the main road as far as she felt was wise. Then, just as she was about to turn and go back, a bird broke out of a bush and flashed across the road. The horse shied with such violence that Carol came near to losing her seat. The reins slipped through her left hand, and reaching with her right to pick them up and shorten her grip, she seized only a handful of mane. And the half-second before she tightened up on the bit was enough. The brute had his neck stretched out, his head forward, and was pounding down the road as hard as he could gallop.

Running away! Carol had an instant's panic and then braced herself.

"Steady, boy—steady," she called to him, but the only effect of her words was to steady her own nerves.

She pulled on his mouth with all her strength, and might as well have tried to check a railroad train. He ran faster than any railroad train, she thought.

She was afraid, horribly so, yet she was immeasurably thrilled and excited. The wild, irresistible speed of the animal was like nothing else she had experienced in the world. The wind whipped her hair about her face, and the sheer excitement of it sent the bright color coursing through her cheeks. She gave up trying to stop him and devoted all her skill to steadying his head lest he swerve or stumble.

The horse was tireless; she lost all track of the distance he covered. Once, mounting a short slope, she thought she had him under control, but at the crest he gained speed and ran on for another mile.

Finally he stopped, his flanks heaving, sweat running from his coat in a hundred rivulets, and his head hanging low. For a moment she sat still until the horse caught breath and she composed her own thoughts.

"It must be miles and miles from home," she said to herself. "And I'll have to go slow, and it'll be dark soon."

She turned the horse toward home and put him into a walk.

"ALTA!" a raucous voice called sharply, and two men sprang out of a ditch at the side of the road and jumped in front of her. They were ragged little men, with spurs strapped to bare feet, but she saw that they both carried efficient-looking rifles.

One of them grabbed her horse by the bit.

"Let go! leave me alone!" she said bravely, though her whole body was cold with terror.

The man paid no attention, but began talking to his companion in slurred, guttural Spanish.

"Let go!" Carol repeated. "Let go, I say!"

Without noticing her, he raised his voice and called, *"Hola, Jefe!"*

Carol heard a rustling in the bushes at the side of the road; she looked and saw the forequarters of a big black thoroughbred. For an instant the animal gathered himself and then took the ditch with a smooth, powerful jump, the man on his back sitting lightly and gracefully. As the horse landed and started toward her at a canter she saw the rider was Enrique Fuentes.

He recognized her in the same instant and, without even checking his horse, slipped to the ground and ran up to her on foot.

"You!" he exclaimed. "You, Miss Curtis! What brings you out here?" He caught himself and went on more slowly. "No, I beg your pardon. I do not mean to be inquisitive. It is enough that your servant has had the pleasure of this chance encounter."

Carol answered:

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"My horse ran away with me. I was carried farther than I meant to go. As I was starting home the men stopped me. Will you make them let me go, please."

"These men," he replied, "are like myself, your servants. What is it you wish?"

"To go home," she said.

Enrique was silent for so long that she wondered why he did not answer.

"I must go home," she repeated.

"Miss Curtis, I will tell you the truth," he answered slowly, and though his tone was uncertain and perplexed she felt his words were absolutely sincere. "You are eight miles from your house. In a very short time it will be growing dark. Every night the *rurales* send patrols out this road and when they meet any one they shoot first and challenge afterward. Neither alone nor with all my men could I guard you from a stray bullet in the dark. You must wait until morning."

"But my brother," protested Carol. "I must get home tonight. He will be frantic if I don't."

"Your brother would rather spend a night of anxiety and see you safe in the morning, than to have you brought in tonight shot."

Carol smiled.

"Yes, I think so, but—" she grew serious again—"what can I do? I can't stay here."

He spoke gravely.

"Miss Curtis, I have a camp near by. In it are five hundred men whose duty it shall be to see that tonight your sleep is untroubled."

It was her turn to be a long time in answering. He stood waiting silently.

"Thank you," she said finally. "You are very kind."

Carol riding, Fuentes on foot leading her horse, and the two men behind bringing his own mount, they left the road and entered a narrow, winding trail. Five minutes brought them to a place where all the undergrowth had been cleared away and only the taller trees left standing.

Scattered about with no seeming order or system were rough shelters of palm leaves spread on frames of newly cut saplings. Lying under these, or sitting in groups cooking or eating about a score of fires, were Enrique's five hundred men. They were rough, ragged, uncouth-looking fellows, but there was a certain air of competence and self-reliance about them which Carol had never seen in the riffraff of the streets of Sta. Rita. Enrique saw her curious gaze.

"They're not smart-looking as soldiers go," he said, "but they can be depended on."

At the center of the encampment, with the nearest shacks at some twenty paces distance, was a single tent. To this Enrique led her. He helped her dismount and held open the flap, saying:

"Your house, Miss Curtis. It is rough, but at least there is a cot which I trust you will not find hard."

Carol, overcome by the strangeness of it all, thanked him monosyllabically. He gave an order to a man who had been squatting near by, and presently there appeared a basin of water and soap, to which Enrique added a towel that he took from a bag in the tent.

"And now," he said, "I shall go and interview the cook."

He returned in a few minutes with a chicken, fried plantains and steaming, aromatic coffee. He put them on a little camp table which stood in the tent, got out plate, knife and fork, and setting up a folding stool stood waiting for her to sit down.

"But this is your own dinner," she protested. "Are you not going to eat too?"

From the formal courtesy of his bow and the tone in which he murmured that his first desire was to wait upon her, she was quick-witted enough to see that he would not join her at his own table, without her express invitation.

"Do sit down, please," she said. "It will be much nicer of you than to make me eat alone."

So bidden, he laid another place and sat down with her.

During the meal and the half-hour afterward their conversation scrupulously avoided all subjects connected with the revolution and its opposition to the railroad. She tried to draw him out about himself and his career, but elicited little beyond the fact that as a boy he had spent some years in a boarding-school in the States.

Just before he left her she said:

"I am so worried about my brother. He will be beside himself."

"I have already sent a man in to the station to find him and tell him you are safe," answered Enrique. "He will travel cross-country and should relieve your brother's anxiety by ten o'clock at the latest."

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"You are very, very thoughtful," she answered. "I can not thank you enough."

"It is nothing. And now doubtless you are tired. I only trust that you sleep well." He moved the table to the head of the cot and put on it a small silver whistle. "If you wish anything during the night," he explained, "that will let me know."

Then without a word he drew out of a holster at his hip a heavy, long-barreled, pearl-handled revolver, and placed it on the bedside table with the muzzle pointing toward the door.

"Good night," he said.

She held out her hand impulsively.

"Good night, and thank you again and again."

When the tent-flap dropped behind him she walked to the table and gazed at the revolver. In the flickering candle-light, which shone dully on the blue-black metal, the weapon looked very big and ugly. She could see the dull gray noses of bullets peeping out of the cylinder, and she shuddered as she thought that there lay in this sinister mechanism the lives of six men. Then she thought of the delicate chivalry of the man who had put it there.

She got into bed, blew out the candle, and in five minutes was asleep.

Some time in the middle of the night she awoke, and when she had remembered where she was, stole to the tent door and peeped out. A little distance off was a flickering fire, making a wavering, dancing circle of light in the darkness. A man sat beside it. Presently the flames flared up for an instant and she saw that he was Fuentes, and that his eyes were open.

She crept back to bed and to untroubled sleep.

XVII

IN THE morning, after Carol had had breakfast, her horse was brought up groomed and saddled. Enrique's horse, too, she saw held ready close by and all over the camp there was a great stir of activity.

Enrique came to the tent.

"Is it time for me to go now?" she asked cheerily.

"Yes," he answered, "to my regret." He paused and then went on. "But before you go I would beg five minutes in which to speak to you."

"Why, certainly," she answered, unsuspecting.

"First I must say one word of myself," he began. "I am, as you know, an outlaw, proscribed, a bandit, if you like. But I am well born, and my breeding and education were as good as any in this country."

She interrupted him.

"It does not require your words to tell me that."

"Thank you. I became an outlaw as the result of a fair fight. And I give you my word that in ten years I have neither committed nor suffered to be committed any violence or robbery which might fairly be called criminal. I have sustained and protected myself and those under me—no more, and I feel that in my own way I have done as much for this country that I love as many others who have held high positions. When this insurrection succeeds, as it must, I shall no longer be an outlaw."

Carol caught her breath sharply.

"Yes, I know," she said. And then, with an uneasy little laugh, "But no one ever thinks of you as an—outlaw."

Quickly the man's expression changed, his self-restraint seemed to slip away, the hand with which he fingered his belt-buckle trembled and as he spoke his voice trembled.

"I would have told you this last night, Miss Curtis, only I feared lest you think that my hospitality was not for its own sake. I tell you now because I must. From that first moment when I saw you in that miserable little *cantina* the night you arrived, I have loved you."

To Carol, mature, experienced, perfectly poised, it came as a sudden unexpected lightning flash, blinding and deafening her and robbing her of all speech and reason.

"Ah, no! Don't!" she cried.

"But it is so," he protested. "From that first time I have known that there existed for me but one woman in the world; that life held for me but one thing worth while—to make her my wife."

"Please! Please! You mustn't!"

"Why not? I love you. Is it wrong that in all humility and with full knowledge of my unworthiness, I should ask you to be my wife?"

Carol knew herself utterly unable to command the situation. She could not reason with him, could hardly talk coherently, so strangely was she moved. In despair she took refuge in evasion.

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"Do you think," she said, not meeting his eyes, "do you think it is fair of you to talk to me so . . . here . . . in your . . ." She did not finish.

Enrique stood rigid, not answering. The color slowly spread over his face. Then he said:

"Miss Curtis, I have forgotten myself." He raised his voice. "*Hola, Juan! Los caballos*— the horses."

Ceremoniously he assisted Carol to mount and then turned and called out an order. All over the clearing Carol saw his followers jumping on their horses.

At another sharp command from Enrique they were in motion. He rode with Carol at the head of the column, keeping a watchful eye on her horse. Behind them were strung out his five hundred mounted men.

"Do we need so many? Is it unsafe?" she asked.

He answered, "When one receives a visit of honor, one's guest rides back with a fitting escort."

When the red-tiled roofs of Sta. Rita were in sight he halted his men.

"From here on we ride alone," he said. "So many might only provoke a fight."

"But it is not safe for you to come any farther. I will go alone from here. Thank you for everything."

She gathered up her reins to start.

"No, I am coming with you," he said.

She saw the futility of protest and the two rode on alone.

As they drew nearer to the town they began to meet occasional horsemen, and in every one of these Carol saw a *rurale* and would grow cold with dread until the rider came near enough to be recognized as a harmless countryman. If Enrique felt concern, he did not show it. She found that he was punctiliously letting her set their pace. At this she put her horse into a smart canter.

"Be careful," he warned. "He will get away from you if you go too fast."

"We can't go too fast," she answered.

Two hundred yards from the little hill on which her cottage stood Carol drew up.

"Now go back, please," she said. "Here I am at home."

"When I see you safe in your house," he answered.

They rode up the side of the hill opposite the railroad station and the town just beyond, and trotted around to the front of the cottage. Down on the station platform Carol saw half a dozen *rurales* lounging about, their horses tied near by. She dismounted.

"Now go, please," she half gasped.

He was on the ground at her side; he took the bridles of the two horses and looped them over a post; he followed her up the steps and on to the veranda.

She looked down to the platform and saw the *rurales* moving about. They seemed to be looking toward the house. Two of them went to their horses and prepared to mount.

"Please, please, hurry!" she panted.

"Miss Curtis," he answered, "here in your own house I say to you that I love you with all my heart and soul and life, and ask you to marry me."

Carol dropped into a chair and covered her face with her hands. The superb courage of the man overwhelmed her. And the thought of the strength of a love for which he so dared was like intense physical pain—pain mixed with she knew not what.

"You must go," she whispered. "Those men down there—they are coming. You will be killed."

"I wait for that answer from you which alone will make life worth while," he replied.

"Not now—please, not——"

Some one ran up the steps. Terrified, Carol jumped up and sprang to the screen door, to come face to face with Harding.

"Thank God!" he said.

Then he saw Enrique just beyond her. Harding stood stock still, speechless. Carol looked over his shoulder; a quick terror came into her eyes and she swung around to Enrique.

"They're coming. Hurry!"

With calm deliberation he bowed and said——

"Another time I shall await your pleasure."

Then with incredible swiftness he ran down the steps and sprang into his saddle.

The six *rurales* riding slowly up the hill to investigate a horse which resembled the famous mount of El Chico, saw him. They shouted and clapped in their spurs.

Enrique's horse was in full gallop in three leaps. He tore across the level hilltop and charged down the steep slope on the other side without slackening. The *rurales* behind him, once they gained the top of the rise, drew revolvers and commenced shooting. Carol, with Harding following, ran

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through the house and watched the pursuit from a back window.

When the *rurales* were half way down the hill Enrique reached the bottom; he swung his horse into the road and flew along it, not even turning to look at the pursuers, who kept shooting continuously. The distance between them lengthened, and Carol began to think that he was safe.

None of the *rurales'* horses was a match for the black thoroughbred. Then from a cross trail three mounted men came into the main road a little ahead of him. The girl's straining eyes could see that they wore khaki uniforms and had carbines slung over their backs. More *rurales!*

Unconsciously she gave a little inarticulate moan. Enrique saw them too, for he began to pull in his horse. Would he surrender? Trapped as he was he must surely give up. And would they take him if he did, or would they shoot him down?

The men ahead had seen him and heard the shots and yells of their comrades. They were galloping to meet him. His horse had come down to a short, stiff-legged gallop.

Ahead of him were the three *rurales* spread across the road, and now, unslinging their carbines, behind him thundered his six pursuers, shouting and yelling; to one side an empty open field, barren of all cover, sloped up to the hilltop from which he had just been driven. The other side of the road was closed by a solid wall of jungle, dense and impenetrable.

Carol shut her eyes. She heard a volley of shots, and, trembling, opened them again.

Enrique had disappeared. The horses of the *rurales* danced and cavorted on the road; the riders brandished machetes and carbines and yelled threats into the jungle; but the man they hunted had vanished.

"He's safe," she breathed. "Oh! He's safe."

XVIII

CAROL stood watching the road. The *rurales* consulted, scattered to course back and forth along the jungle's edge, gathered together and consulted again; and rode slowly back toward the station. Gradually she became aware that Harding was regarding her with a strange expression.

"I'm very glad you're safe," he said in an awkward, restrained tone.

"Safe?" she answered, trying so hard to keep her voice light that it was almost flippant. "Why, of course. It was quite an adventure, but you didn't fancy there was any real danger, did you?"

"We hoped not, but we could not help fearing all sorts of things."

She was indignant. "He is as honorable and trustworthy as any man I have ever met," she retorted.

Harding looked puzzled and yet seemed unwilling to question her. There was an awkward silence which was broken when her brother burst impetuously into the room. He embraced her effusively and it seemed to Carol, displayed an extravagant amount of joy and relief at seeing her safely home. Then, the first burst of jubilation spent, he assumed an accusatory tone.

"But, Carol, if you had known what you've put us through! What in the world have you been up to?"

"And what in the world do you mean?" she asked quickly.

"Why, where have you been, of course?"

"The messenger never reached you?" She looked from one to the other of the two men. Harding shook his head. Ned answered, "Not a messenger."

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" she cried impulsively.

Harding looked tremendously relieved.

"Tell us what happened, Miss Curtis," he said gently, "if you feel equal to it."

Carol recounted a brief outline of her adventure.

"You were very fortunate," said Harding gravely, "and we are fortunate that you were so well cared for and brought back to us."

But Carol felt that he disapproved, that he considered she had done wrong in accepting the outlaw's hospitality. Yet because she did not realize all that lay beneath it, her instinct went a little wrong in reading Harding's feeling. It was not disapproval but a very selfish regret that El Chico had had such a capital opportunity to appear so well before her.

"I must be going, now," he said, suddenly seeming to remember that he was in a great hurry.

Left alone with her, Ned became very serious and brotherlike and made no attempt to spare her feelings.

"I don't suppose it's your fault, Carol," he said, half as if he thought she really were to blame, "but it's been bad business.

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There's been trouble with the men in the ballast camp—that rotten newspaper story, you know. The old man himself could have stopped it. He was just starting up there, when I told him you were lost. He turned back, let the ballast camp go bang and spent the night running the search for you."

"Search for me!" exclaimed Carol. She had forgotten about that inevitable consequence of her disappearance.

"I should say so." Ned grinned woefully. "What! Do you suppose any of us slept last night? Every white man at headquarters was out when they should have been at the ballast camp sitting on the lid up there; rural guards and natives too. Most of 'em still out. The old man's probably calling 'em in now."

"Ned, I shall never forgive myself!" she exclaimed.

"Oh, well, I suppose you couldn't help it," he replied cheerlessly. "But I've got to skip. The old man'll be wanting me."

He left Carol very unhappy. Instead of being a help, she told herself miserably, she had been a drag of the very worst kind, at precisely the worst time. Just when Harding had needed all his energy and resources to combat and nip in the bud an incipient revolt, he had thrown up everything else to concern himself with her safety. And now the trouble perhaps had got beyond him. If the first trickle of water through a dam is stopped in time there may yet be safety. Let it be neglected, it may at any instant swell into the flood which destroys all in its path. Was it too late, she wondered fearfully.

Down in his office Harding was calling in the searchers, and giving orders that all of them were to lay off from work and get some sleep. He might need them later and he wanted them to be fresh.

He took his telephone and called the ballast camp. No answer. He repeated the call—one long and two short rings—a dozen times, taking down the receiver occasionally to listen. Finally a voice came in on the wire.

"This ain't the ballast camp," it began.

"Who are you?" demanded Harding.

"Cowan, track supervisor," was the answer. "I'm talking from Section Camp 9. The wire was cut between here and the ballast outfit an hour ago, Mr. Harding. Least it ain't working."

"Send a man up there to find out how they're getting on," ordered Harding.

"Done it already," came the answer.

"All right. How are the section men?"

"Restless, sir. Milling about like a bunch of steers ready to stampede."

"Hold 'em down," jerked out Harding, "and keep me posted."

"Yes, sir."

Harding hung up and ordered his car to be made ready for a trip to the rail-head.

In ten minutes his telephone bell rang.

"It's Cowan, Mr. Harding," said the voice.

"Go ahead."

"Native just come in with a note from Peters, foreman of the ballast outfit. Here it is. 'Whole works smashed up. Men drinking and agitating all night, started rough work this morning. Stood 'em off long as we could. They raided commissary and burned quarters. We had to take the engine and beat it up to the track camp. Couldn't get through toward Sta. Rita. Word from track camp was that they expected trouble, so maybe we can help 'em out there. Whoever gets this, telephone it to the old man in Sta. Rita . . . Henry Peters.' That's all, Mr. Harding."

"All right. Now wait." Harding thought for perhaps twenty seconds and then spoke:

"Now, Cowan, that ballast outfit's blown up. There's no helping it. But you, and anybody you can pick up, buzz about for all you're worth, and keep all those other gangs quiet. I can't promise you any help from here soon because they're liable to make a raid on headquarters, where they think the money is, and we'll need all the men here. So do your best."

"We're on the job, Mr. Harding," came the answer.

"And keep me posted."

"Yes, sir. That all?"

"Yes, so long."

"So long."

So the ballast camp had "blown up." The hundred laborers had got drunk, rioted and chased away the five Americans who had them in charge. It was bad enough without going farther, but the great question was: would it spread, or was it a sporadic outburst which would die out when the fumes of the rank liquor which caused it had evaporated?

In ordinary times Harding would easily

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have been able to obtain sufficient guards of *rurales* to post at every danger point and, for a time at least, prevent the worst from happening. But now, with an insurrection in full swing, and the insurgents every day drawing closer to Sta. Rita, he knew it was hopeless to ask for troops to be detached from the garrison and sent to outlying points.

The revolution had indeed assumed formidable proportions. Carlos Iriquidi, to be sure, had done little. His popular uprising had fizzled and the great army he had hoped to head had not materialized. But Enrique Fuentes had done much. To the men of his own personal following had been added many who had been incited to revolt by Iriquidi's propaganda, but had preferred to join the movement under the standard of a leader who was known as a fighter rather than a revolutionist.

So El Chico's force had grown until the five hundred men whom Carol had seen were only one division of it. He had swept in toward Sta. Rita opposed but feebly by the government. He had captured numbers of small bodies of *rurales* stationed in outlying hamlets and a battle between the two main forces was expected soon.

From the distant capital of the republic came no help or news of help for the distressed government of the province. The country was, after all, no more than a loosely federated bundle of separate states or provinces. The troops in each province were largely under provincial control; and provincial jealousy of the central authorities had worked so effectively that in such times as this there was no strong central power to quell a local revolution. And even what power there was might as easily be found ranged on one side as on the other.

So, with the Sta. Rita government in such straits to preserve its existence, there was no likelihood of its losing its valuable troops by stringing them through the country along a railroad line.

Harding longed to take his car and go to the front. But he knew that the situation was not to be met by dealing personally with any one man or set of men. What was needed was a steady, clear-thinking, directing brain, and at headquarters he could be much more directly in touch with the whole field.

He heard no more of the mutineers in the ballast camp, but short reports continued to come in from Cowan. They were always the same. The men were everywhere seething on the point of an uprising, but still doing nothing worse than talk.

At two in the afternoon the telephone ceased to work for more than a few miles beyond Sta. Rita.

Harding sent for Bill Healy.

"Bill, I want you to go out on the line," he told him. "Find out what you can. Do what you can. And, above all, contrive to give me warning in case those fellows take it in their heads to come in here to make trouble."

"I get you, John," answered Healy. "I'm off in five minutes."

For hours no more news came in, and as long as it did not, Harding, with twenty years' knowledge of Healy's resourcefulness and cool head in times of danger, felt that as yet no attack was imminent.

A little after eight his telephone bell rang.

"That you, John?" came the voice over the wire. "This is Healy. I'm at Section Camp 7. Found the break in the wire and patched it. Now listen—" he was talking rapidly as if there were a tremendous hurry—"things are bad—can't tell which way the cat'll jump. There's a mob at Eight workin' 'emselves up. If they get started in, it's all off. I'm—wait a second."

He stopped speaking into the instrument and Harding heard intermittently the sound of his voice talking Spanish. It came in little gusts of meaningless, detached words joined by indistinguishable sounds.

Then suddenly it broke off and Healy's voice, sharp and loud, sang out:

"They're coming, John. Look out for——"

The report of a shot roared in Harding's ear at the receiver.

"Hello!" he called. "Hello there, Bill!" He rattled the hook of the receiver and called again: "Hello! Hello there!"

There was no answer.

XIX

WITH the pistol shot still ringing in his ears, Harding went over to Sta. Rita to see the *commandante*. A torrential downpour had set in and as he drove through the deserted streets he prayed that the rain might keep up, for there could be no better means of preventing

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a riot than by half drowning the rioters.

Don Guillermo Ribeira was a pompous, long-winded little man with body puffed out by high living, and head inflated by grandiose notions of his own great ability and importance.

When Harding told him that he feared trouble with his laborers and wanted military protection, Don Guillermo pooh-poohed the idea. The common people of the country were, he declared, peaceable, mild-mannered and quite incapable of harming their beneficent American employers.

Harding insisted that the situation was serious, and finally convinced the pompous little man that there was at least a possibility of trouble, whereupon the *commandante* declared grandiloquently that with his *rurales* in Sta. Rita it was inconceivable that harm should come to the Americans on their property. He expatiated on the warlike virtues of his brave men and by indirection conferred high praise on their commander. He banged his saber scabbard noisily on the marble floor, declaring—

"While there lives one of my troopers, Mr. Harding, rest assured that those villains shall not harm you."

"Then you will send us a guard?" said Harding.

"A guard, sir, a sufficient guard? I myself—" he swelled out his chest and pounded it with a fat fist— "myself I charge with the sacred duty of your protection."

"Thanks," said Harding. "We may need help at any time now. Please send us some men as soon as you can."

"Within the hour orders shall issue. Rest assured."

The interview took place in the San Carlos Club. When Harding departed the *commandante* seemed to be in no great hurry to leave his comfortable chair to undertake his martial duties. Don Antonio Saez, who had been sitting at the other end of the long room, strolled over and joined him, and the two were soon immersed in an interesting and absorbing conversation.

When Harding got back to the station the rain had already stopped. He found Cavendish and his force busy packing books, documents and accounts and moving them, a cartload at a time, to the vaults of the Sta. Rita bank.

Cavendish was superintending the operation as quietly and methodically as if it were an incident of every-day business, keeping duplicate lists of everything he moved, numbering the packing-cases, and tacking on them tags marked with their precise contents.

"In case any one not familiar with the books and accounts has to take them over," he remarked to Harding, "he will be helped in his work if he can find things readily."

"But no one is thinking of putting any one in your place," said Harding.

"I know, sir, but——"

He trailed off into a mumble. And back of thick, horn-rimmed glasses and beneath a pedantic, finical manner, Harding had an instant's glimpse of a cool-headed, steel-nerved fighting man.

He found Ned Curtis in his own office putting in code a cablegram in which, without any mincing of words, the New York office was told that it was money or ruin. The cable dispatched, the two men consulted about Carol, and finally resolved that she should be put aboard an English steamer, which was due in the port early next morning. That night, they planned, she should sleep in the hotel in Sta. Rita.

When they went up to the house to inform her of their decision, Carol demurred at the steamer, and flatly refused to consider the hotel.

"I'll sleep here to night," she said, "and then in the morning we'll see. If it's clear that my staying here is going to make it more awkward for you, I promise I'll go without a word."

And with that they had to be content. There was little sleep around the quarters of the Sta. Rita and Northern that night. All of the American employees who lived in the town stayed at the station, bunking in with those whose quarters were there. There was a great furbishing up of six-shooters and rifles, and sharing of ammunition, and when all defensive preparations were made, some one started a poker game in which more than half of the twenty men took part, either as players, or spectators who amused themselves laying side wagers. At the outset Andy McHenry announced that cash entries only would be considered.

"No jawbone, settle-up-next-pay-day in this game, boys. The intestate laws of this benighted country don't let you collect gambling debts."

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At one o'clock Bill Healy came in on a track velocipede.

"They rushed me and I had to beat it," he explained imperturbably. "Every *hombre* this side of track camp, and half of them from there, is on his way in."

"Have any trouble getting through?" asked Harding.

"Some," Healy grinned.

"Have to hurt any one or——"

"Kill 'em, you mean? No." He banged his fist on the table. "I'll give you my word, John, it was the hardest job I ever had, to keep from shooting a slug through some of them fellows what tried to stop me. But I did have just enough sense to know it would make the others so much worse. I guess there's some mighty sore heads among 'em, though," he added consolingly.

He also told them that Cowan and his men had been unable to get through, but were reported safe at a native plantation.

Harding hauled three of the onlookers away from the poker game and sent them on a hand-car to the wye, a mile up the line, where they would serve as an outpost.

Just as dawn was breaking one of these came back on foot. He reported that a crowd of men had been sighted coming down the track. The Americans had halted them; one of the laborers had fired a revolver; the Americans had replied; and the crowd had retired precipitously into the night. "They just naturally beat it," he declared with pride. Harding, not at all sure that their beating it was any more than a temporary withdrawal, elicited the further information that the encounter had occurred an hour before, but because the advance had not been renewed the outpost had not thought it necessary to send an immediate report.

Harding promptly sent a messenger to the *commandante* to say that his *rurales* were needed at once. Then he went to wake up Carol and insist that she go over to the town without delay.

Carol, who had gone to sleep without undressing, called out that she would be ready in two minutes. She rebelled at being sent away, and was tortured by the thought of sitting in safety when a mile away her brother and Harding might be in danger. It would be far easier to stay and share it with them, for then at least she would know what was happening and perhaps be able to help a little. But she was wise enough to know that if she did stay, Harding's course would be swayed too much by his regard for her own personal safety. Though Harding would not admit it, her brother had told her with brutal frankness that it was her night's absence and Harding's consequent neglect of his duty which had permitted the crisis to arise.

"I'm ready to go," she said, joining him in the living-room. "Do you think it is going to be bad?"

"I hope not," he said so gravely that she knew that he feared it would be very bad.

Down at the station she found her horse saddled and her brother and two other men waiting to act as escort. Harding helped her mount and then took her hand for a minute.

"Good-by," he said cheerfully. "Don't worry. We'll be all right." He hesitated. "I think I'll tell Ned to stay there with you," he added.

A wave of gratitude surged over her, but she answered:

"And if you do, I shall send him back. His place is with you."

The four horses were turned into the road which led to the bridge.

"Come on!" called Ned impatiently. "Let's let 'em out."

"Wait!" shouted Harding. "Wait there!"

In the dim morning light he had seen half a dozen men clamber out of the river-bed and station themselves on the approach to the bridge.

"Give me your horse, Ned," he commanded, and promptly jumped into the saddle the boy vacated. "Now wait here, the rest of you," he said, and was off down the road at a canter.

As he neared the river the number of men around the bridge head increased. Carol saw him stop in front of them and judged that he was talking to them.

Suddenly from the back of the group there was a shot. Harding pushed his horse through the crowd, leaned over, caught at something and then came back at a gallop, dragging a man along with him. The crowd buzzed about like swarming bees, but did not follow.

Harding was back in a few seconds.

"Here, take him and tie him up," he called, flinging his captive into the group of Americans. He turned to Carol. "I'm afraid, Miss Curtis, it's safer for you to stay here than to try to get to town now. The men

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we thought had been frightened back at the wye simply left the track and followed the stream. The river-bed over there is full of them."

"Tell me where you want me to stay," she said humbly. "I'm not going to be a nuisance."

"Wait in my office, please," he replied.

"Now then," he snapped at Ned, "it's time to break up that poker game. Go tell 'em to cash in and come down here with all their artillery in plain sight."

The players, losers and winners alike, responded to the summons with joyful alacrity. The would-be rioters, who were now swarming thickly about on the river bank, saw twenty well-armed businesslike-looking Americans standing outside the station.

Harding, leaving Healy in charge, went to a window in the second story of the station whence there was a good view of the town.

"The sight of the boys will hold 'em for a while," he said to himself. "But those *rurales* can't come any too soon."

He could see the *rurales*' barracks, a big enclosure just behind the governor's palace, surrounded by a massive fortress-like stone wall. But even with a pair of field-glasses he was unable to discern any activity. Perhaps his messenger had reached the *commandante* and the men were already on the way. Then he saw half a dozen troopers ride through the gate and gallop across the wide barrack square.

Immediately the whole place was alive with men running about, saddling horses and leading them here and there, and in less than five minutse the four squadrons were formed up on the square. A man he recognized as the sub-*commandante*, an able young officer, rode out in front of them and appeared to give a command. The squadron swung into column and poured out through the gate.

Harding put down his glasses with a sigh of relief. The *commandante* was sending his whole force, and ten minutes at the most should bring them to the river. He looked again. The column on emerging into the street had turned in the opposite direction and was moving away from the station at a sharp trot. It was quickly lost to view in the closely built-up street, but Harding could follow its progress by the long cloud of dust which hung over it. Straight through the town the dust cloud moved, and out into the country on the other side. They were not coming to help him at all.

Harding went back to his men.

"Boys," he addressed them, "we can expect no help from the troops. We've got to handle this thing ourselves. Now what I want you to remember is this: Don't start anything. Keep your heads, and don't a one of you shoot unless I say so."

For a minute his eye traveled back and forth over the group of men who stood silent before him. He seemed to be satisfied with his inspection, for with a curt "wait here," he turned sharply about and walked toward the river bank. At that moment a barefooted native boy came into the station with a cablegram. It was delivered to Ned Curtis, who hastily decoded it and put the translation in a sealed envelope which he gave to the office messenger, a native boy who worshiped Harding as a god on earth and whose one supreme happiness lay in the fact that the great man trusted him to fetch and carry important papers and documents.

"Find Mr. Harding and give him that. Right off," Ned told him.

When Harding came within a few feet of the mob he stopped and held up his hand to command attention.

"Listen," he said.

The men surged about him in a thick mass. There were several hundred of them, surly and suspicious, a potential conflagration needing only a spark to set it off. Many of them carried firearms. Harding made out weapons of every type, from old muzzle-loading Tower muskets to Mauser pistols. Every one of them had a knife.

"Now then," began Harding, "tell me what you want?"

For an instant the crowd seemed afraid to answer. Then a man at the rear called—

"Our money!"

Another repeated it, and, encouraged by the sound of their own voices, scores of them called with varying tones of truculence—

"Our money—we want our money—give us our money."

Harding stilled them with uplifted hand.

"Now listen to me. I am going to tell you the plain truth. Today there is no money." A threatening murmur rumbled through the throng. . . . "Wait! 'Today' I say. But your money is safe. Very soon it will come. Even if it does not, the law of this country gives you your wages if the

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whole railroad has to be sold to get them for you. And I give you my word that whatever happens you shall be paid to the last cent."

The crowd plainly felt the force of his words and were swayed by the overwhelming, dominant personality of the man who spoke to them. Those in the front rank nodded and mumbled:

"*Si. Si.* The *Jefe* speaks well."

Harding hammered the blow home. Sweeping over the crowd with his eye he said:

"And is there a man of you who can say I have ever cheated him? Is there a man of you who has ever yet gone unpaid?"

A vigorous shaking of heads answered him and there were mutterings of "He speaks the truth," "He is honest with us." Then a voice called: "I was cheated." Instant silence.

"Come out here," answered Harding quickly. "Let me see you."

But at that the man's courage evaporated and he was loath to obey. Unwilling and holding back he was pushed to the front by his companions, until he stood face to face with Harding.

"Now tell us about it," said Harding.

The fellow seemed dazed and unable to answer.

"Yes, tell us," said another.

With his eyes on the ground the man whined, "Last month they robbed me of ten days' pay."

Harding spoke distinctly:

"You are a liar." A quick gasp of amazement from the crowd. "The month before you gambled away your pay envelope and did not pay your boarding-house keeper. Last month the company paid him for you lest it lose such a valiant workman by starvation."

The crowd tittered, then guffawed, and Harding knew that he had them.

"Now then, go back to your camps," he began in a kindly voice, when an envelope was thrust into his hand. He glanced at it mechanically and saw it was marked "cablegram." There flashed into his mind that it must mean the money had come. He tore it open and read—

"Absolutely no money available."

Only for an instant did the bitter disappointment and discouragement show in his face, but that instant was enough. The crowd saw it.

Some one yelled, "Is it about the money? Read it to us?"

Harding crammed the paper into his pocket.

"Go back to your camps," he said. "You shall be——"

"Read us what is on the paper!"

"It is a private message not concerning you. Now go back."

"He is afraid to read it to us. It says there is no money. . . . It says pay with promises." From the outskirts of the throng a voice bawled: "The paper says, *compadres*, that there is absolutely no money available."

The mob broke into an angry clamor. Harding held up his hand again, but they gave him no heed.

"Listen to me," he shouted at them. "Listen to me." And finally commanded a moment's silence. "I have spoken fairly to you and without threats. Now I say to you that if you go farther you will lose not your money but your lives."

It cowed them for a minute. Harding pushed his way through the throng, and, never looking behind, walked slowly back to the station.

In the mob all was confusion; a dozen would-be leaders shouted out a dozen plans of action. Then one, stronger-lunged and more diabolically impelled than the rest, called:

"Come to the *cantina*, friends! Let us consult there!"

Near by was a little drinking-place, patronized by the laborers from the station. To this the mob swept. Those first to enter ordered glasses of rum and were served in the regular fashion. Some few produced money to pay. Then, when the crowd in the bar increased, a man seized a bottle from back of the counter and passed it to those behind him; another did the same, and in the twinkling of an eye the shop was being sacked and the loot being distributed among the mob.

From the station the Americans were witnesses to the scene.

"That means it'll be the real thing, John," said Healy to Harding. "Once they get that stuff in 'em they won't listen to no arguments except them that makes a noise when you pull the trigger!"

"You're right," said Harding grimly.

While the mob, thus occupied, was inciting itself to further deeds, he planned his

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defense. He promptly decided to abandon the main station building. It was too big and rambling to be easily held by his twenty men; it was as inflammable as a tinder box; and its thin wooden walls would give no protection against bullets.

His own office was the best place. Built of a single course of brick, it would not resist field artillery or even an old-fashioned battering-ram, but the mutineers had no cannon and would not be allowed to get close enough to do any battering, and the bricks would stop all bullets. Moreover the building offered a clear field of fire to all sides. A space the width of five tracks lay between it and the station. The sixth or outer track of the yard was shorter than the others and came to an end against the wall of the little building. Harding had once thought of having the office building moved back so that this last track could be prolonged parallel with the others. He wished now that he had, for it would have meant so much more open space from the nearest cover in which the rioters could find shelter.

So the men were ordered into the office building, except for two scouts left outside to watch the mob now rapidly growing crazed with drink. Water barrels were carried in and filled, food was provided, and Carol Curtis ran up the hill to her cottage and returned with an armful of sheets.

"Bandages," she said, when Harding questioned her with a look.

He turned away quickly. The girl's steady, confident courage made him nearly break out with words he felt she had no wish to hear from him.

A chorus of yells came to their ears, punctuated by occasional shots. One of the scouts rushed over to report that the mob, firing into the air with drunken abandon, was swarming toward the station.

"Can't me and Bill shoot 'em up some?" he pleaded.

"No," answered Harding. "You and Bill get yourselves inside here."

A minute later the advance of the mob came around the end of the station and spread over the platform. They battered at the doors and were surprised to find them unlocked and the offices within untenanted. For a few minutes they found occupation in swarming through the building, smashing, breaking and destroying. Then some one yelled—

"Where have the cursed Americans fled?"

The fortified, sealed-up aspect of the little office building caught their attention, and they gave an exultant yell. The station disgorged its looters and the whole crew crowded on to the platform looking at the office, pointing, and yelling foul threats.

"Stand by, boys," called Harding.

The eight men who had rifles manned loopholes. Those who had only revolvers stood close by, ready in case it came to close action.

"Sit down on the floor in that corner, please," he said to Carol, and without questioning she complied.

The milling about of the mob began to resolve itself into a general forward movement.

Harding threw open the heavy window shutter where Healy was standing.

"Any man who tries to cross the tracks will be shot," he shouted in Spanish.

A drunken man, the same who half an hour before Harding had faced down, answered him with a curse, and flung a bottle at the open window. Then, drawing a revolver, he jumped down from the platform and started across the tracks, firing as fast as he could pull the trigger.

"Get him, Bill," said Harding.

Bill got him.

For a little time the crowd was stupefied as they gazed at the man lying in a slowly widening pool of blood. Then a hundred separate cries swelled into a single, blood-curdling, wild-beast yell and they charged across the tracks.

The man who got the farthest died huddled against the wall of the building. Two or three others lay quite still across the tracks; some who were hit managed to drag themselves away. The bulk of the mob fled to the opposite side of the station.

There was a long wait. Most of the Americans thought the rioters had had enough of it and would gradually drift away.

"Not while they're still full of booze," said Healy. "No, they're cooking up something. Thank God we're in a building what they can't set fire to."

"Maybe they'll try dynamite," suggested some one.

"I wouldn't like to be walking close to the *hombre* that carries any dynamite across them tracks," said Healy grinning.

It was an hour before the natives showed any signs of activity. Then a score or more

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of them were seen to come by the end of the station building and run up the tracks toward the roundhouse, half a mile away.

Andy McHenry, the master mechanic, groaned:

"The filthy blackguards! They're going to put our engines on the blink."

It seemed that they were making a thorough job of it, for they were inside the roundhouse nearly an hour. Then, to the amazement of the Americans, the finest and heaviest of the four locomotives slowly backed out and swung out on the track with her nose pointing down toward the station.

"What the blazes!" ejaculated Healy, "Are they getting up an excursion or what?"

"Give me those glasses quick!" snapped Harding.

Some one put them in his hand and through them he watched men running about in front of the engine, setting switches, saw two men who had been riding on the tank get down on the ground, and knew by the white cloud shooting up from the safety-valve that the engine carried a full head of steam.

He put down the glasses and spoke to the men who clustered about him.

"They're going to run her wild down this outside track," he said.

They all knew what he meant. The rioters had found the most powerful artillery in the world. A hundred-ton projectile was to be sent crashing into the little fort.

Even tough, hard-bitten Bill Healy grew pale under his grizzled stubble.

"My God!" he whispered. "My God!"

A man who had been watching from a window in the next room sang out:

"They're coming around in front of the station again, Mr. Harding. Looks like they were getting ready for another rush."

"Can't help it," said Harding. "Unbar the door. All of you be ready to make a run up the hill to my house when I give the word. And when you do, hang together in one bunch and keep Miss Curtis in the middle. And you," he said, turning to her, "keep close to me, please. There won't be much danger."

"I know it," she said calmly.

But as they looked steadily into each others eyes they both knew he did not speak the truth. Out in the open with a blood-maddened, drunken mob surrounding them, would be the greatest danger a woman could face.

Harding turned back to the window. The engine had started toward them and was already getting headway. A man dropped out of the cab.

"Get ready, boys," Harding called. "Half a minute more."

XX

JUST as Harding spoke, something swooped down toward the brick building from the direction of the road and, passing like a black shadow, darted up alongside the track in the direction of the great locomotive. It was a man on a big black horse.

The other members of that pirate engine crew had slipped to the ground now, and the last man, with the theatrical instinct of the Latin-American, had tied down the whistle cord, so that as the engine raced forward, gaining momentum with every yard, a diabolical shriek poured from it.

The rioters paused in their first rush to stare at the wild horseman. Evidently he was not one of them. The little garrison gazed in wonder after the galloping streak of black, leaping toward the locomotive as if the rider meant to meet it head on. On he sped, clearing ditches, swerving past switches, darting through a hedge.

"Few men can ride like that, even in this country," thought Harding, admiring the lightning speed maintained over such a course.

Horse and rider flashed up the track for nearly three hundred yards and then, as they approached a pile of new ties lying beside the track, the rider leaned back in his saddle and pulled in so abruptly that the animal was jerked violently up and down. Before the horse stopped, the rider leaped off, and in a twinkling picked up one of the ties.

Harding had seen two Jamaica niggers grunt painfully over carrying one of those heavy slabs of timber a few feet, but the horseman raised his burden as if it were hollow, and hurled it across the track in front of the screaming locomotive. Then, glancing up at the mad engine, as if gaging the time and distance, he flung another. The next instant he leaped over to his horse, which stood quivering with excitement almost upon the track, and whisked the animal out of the way, jumping aside himself, just as the huge machine struck.

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The shock of that impact nearly three hundred yards away shook the brick house to its foundations. The locomotive leaped into the air, crashed down, and hurled itself diagonally across the tracks toward the river, still shrieking wildly, its wheels striking out long sparks when they smote crosswise against the rails. A little man, one of the rioters, who had been manipulating a switch, found himself directly in the path of the monster. He started to rush out of the way, and the locomotive, swerving this way and that, seemed to be following him. Suddenly it leaped upon him. He turned a horrified face at the huge hulk of steel and then disappeared beneath it.

The engine lunged on across the tracks, smashed a heavy switch stand as if it had been a stick, and plunged with a final scream of the whistle over the embankment above the river. There was a terrific roar of splintering metal and escaping steam, and then silence.

"The fool's gone and smashed my best locomotive!" cried Andy McHenry, with something like a sob.

Carol tittered hysterically.

"Bar the door again, boys," ordered Harding, and he sank back into a chair breathing heavily, the sweat streaming from his face.

The heavy bolts were shot back and furniture piled against the stout oak. Then Cavendish, who was keeping watch at a window, said—

"I fancy they're preparing for a rush, sir."

The apparition of the horseman and the wreck of the locomotive had stopped the besiegers. They simply stood in their tracks, staring. Now that the incident was past, they seemed suddenly to go mad. Some rushed up the tracks toward the horseman, and others, shouting in frenzy, charged toward the brick house.

Their onslaught was marked by the swift pat-pat of bullets against the walls. But this time the little garrison was taken unawares. Cavendish alone was at his window, and his six-shooter began barking into the sunshine. At his third shot, however, a bullet struck the barrel and hurled the weapon from his hand, while the deflected projectile ripped the flesh in Andy McHenry's left arm.

"To the windows!" shouted Harding, jumping up, and he hurried Carol into her corner out of range.

Cavendish wrung two badly wrenched fingers, his face twisted with pain. Then, with a serious air, he picked up his revolver and, holding it in his left hand, returned to his post.

But the attack had slackened almost as quickly as it began. Inexplicably the invaders were running back across the tracks and gathering in a group about the station, where they were jabbering and gesticulating excitedly.

At this moment Harding's ear caught a new sound. It was a hollow, insistent drumming, and seemed to come from the river. Its volume swelled until it became a roar like the furious beating of a hundred tom-toms. Harding knew that sound and his face lightened.

"The *rurales* at last!" he breathed. "They're coming across the bridge now."

BUT they were not the *rurales*. They came up the slight slope toward the station at a gallop; little, ragged men, on the scrubby native horses, and they rode down upon the crowd of rioters and right through them, scattering the mob in all directions.

They yelled lustily as they came, the squadron of little men, but not a shot was fired. Then, while the bulk of them were chasing the rioters helter-skelter in all directions into the bush, a little squad rode toward the single horseman who had saved the brick house. He was pacing in leisurely fashion back along the track, his magnificent black mount, foam-flecked from his wild dash, arching his neck and champing at the bit. The rioters who had started after him so ferociously had disappeared.

The little squad joined him and he rode on toward the brick house, a striking figure among those little men, taller than any of them, with a fine grace in his carriage, from his broad sombrero to his heavily spurred boots. Harding saw that it was Fuentes.

"Don't shoot, boys," he called. "Open the door again."

Carol had stepped to his side and was peering out of the window.

"Oh, I knew it must be he!" she exclaimed. "Nobody else in the world could have done that."

Harding, at a glance, saw the color flaming in her cheeks and the sudden light in her eyes. Then she turned away hastily. Harding stared at Fuentes again, as if he

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were taking the measure of the man. The joyous relief at the rescue had gone from him.

"Is Mr. Harding there?" called Fuentes.

"I'll join you in a minute," shouted Harding.

When he stepped out, Fuentes was standing beside his horse, waiting.

"Miss Curtis?" he asked quickly.

"She's inside. She wasn't hurt," replied Harding.

Fuentes glanced toward the door, and then his gaze returned to Harding, and for a minute the two men looked at each other appraisingly.

By this time the other men were pouring out of the house and each wanted to thank Fuentes and shake him by the hand.

"You pulled us out of a nasty mess," said Harding. "Things looked pretty black then, and we had a girl to look after."

"We were fighting the *rurales* about four miles the other side of the town," said the bandit negligently. "One of my men brought word of the trouble here."

"You left your own fight, with fifty men, to rescue us!" exclaimed Harding in amazement.

Fuentes smiled.

"I withdrew this detachment with ostentation and swung around their left flank, as if to engineer some surprise against the town. I presume the *Commandante* Ribeira withdrew his men immediately. He is the sort who withdraws a superior force to a strongly entrenched position and yells for help."

"At any rate, we were glad to see you."

"Oh, as for that, I owed you something for the dynamite incident, Mr. Harding. Now I believe we are quits. Hereafter——"

He paused as a sound of shooting arose faintly from the farther side of the town.

"Ah," he cried, "as I thought. Don Guillermo, the doughty defender of Sta. Rita, is retreating with his dignity and avoirdupois unimpaired."

Fuentes did not resume his interrupted train of speech, but Harding's interpretation was that, now they were quits, Fuentes felt under no obligations to stave off attacks on the road. After all, the cry of the revolutionists was, "Down with the accursed Yankee railroad!" and Fuentes was the active leader of the revolution.

Harding noted that Fuentes lingered and kept glancing at the door.

Carol, for some reason, had succumbed to an unusual shyness. She felt she could not meet Fuentes under Harding's gaze. So when the men flocked out to greet him she manifested a sudden interest in Andy McHenry's wounded arm, and insisted upon dressing it and binding it up, much to Andy's disgust, for he was very shy with the ladies, and besides he was burning to get out to see what remained of his mangled locomotive. Carol, talking rapidly, dressed the wound very slowly, tying and untying the bandage, while Andy shut his lips tightly and said never a word.

Finally she heard some more horsemen advancing, then a confusion of voices, then Fuentes speaking in tones of command and a native voice upraised in a plea of terror. She glanced in some apprehension toward the window and the next instant Fuentes's voice, in an entirely different intonation, came to her through the half-open shutters.

"Will you please step to the door a minute, Miss Curtis?"

He stood just outside, tall, erect, dangling his broad sombrero in his left hand. At his side stood one of his followers, holding the coal-black horse, and before him two more of them held a ragged, terror-stricken wretch, who had been a sort of ringleader of the rioters.

"You must forgive my intrusion," said Fuentes. "I wanted this man to see you before we let him go."

He turned to the captive and let loose a torrent of Spanish words, at which the wretch kept muttering "*Sil Sil*" and crossing himself hastily and attempting to shield his face, as if the phrases were blows.

"What is it?" asked Carol of Harding, who had stepped to the group. "What does he say?"

"He's just giving a warning," replied Harding.

He himself was astounded at Fuentes's vehemence. The bandit was telling the man to photograph the image of Miss Curtis in his brain, for if she were disturbed or even a hair of her head harmed by him or any of his fellows, the miscreants and all their relatives and friends would be tortured to death. Fuentes described in eloquent detail just what would happen to them.

"Do you understand?" he concluded.

"Oh, *si, si, señor!*" exclaimed the man.

"Then go," said the chief.

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The man was released, and before his two captors could restrain him he had flung himself on the ground before Fuentes and kissed his boot. Then he jumped to his feet and made off along the tracks.

"Forgive me for annoying you with the fellow, Miss Curtis?" said Fuentes. He hesitated, seemed about to turn away and then added in his more formal manner, "When next the honor of seeing you comes to me, I trust all such annoyances will be over."

Carol felt her color mounting under his gaze, and she could tell that Ned and Harding were watching her closely; but she laughed easily as she made her reply.

"You keep piling up my obligations so that I am positively embarrassed. Come when you can."

She stepped over to the black horse and patted his forehead while he nuzzled against her shoulder.

Fuentes laughed.

"The obligations are mine," he said, "for a series of lucky privileges."

He turned to Harding.

"I should advise you to get a guard of *rurales* here," he said, "until things grow quieter. I can assure you my men will give them no trouble."

"Thank you," said Harding.

Fuentes bent over Carol's hand, then leaped into the saddle and rode off with his men clattering behind him.

"Wainwright," called Harding, "those tracks are pretty badly smashed. Get some men to clean things up as soon as you can. I'll have to go to Sta. Rita again to see the *commandante*. We can't stand much more of this sort of thing."

XXI

THE following morning Carol was utterly exhausted by the strain under which she had been. So quite sensibly she stayed in bed. About the middle of the morning Ned sent up some letters which had arrived by the steamer the day before. Among them was one from her cousin in Wall Street. It ran:

MY DEAR CAROL:

Your letter asking for information about Hemingway gave me great interest. I know the man personally very slightly, and by reputation much better. He has long been regarded by those in the know as a good example of the kind of man who is chiefly responsible for bringing all large financial operations into disrepute. A great many people here fear him, and a great many more dislike him. For several reasons I was only too glad to use your hints to do some detective work, in the hope that this time Hemingway might be caught with the goods on him. There were several others willing to help, so we found out a good deal.

Briefly it is this way:

Your Sta. Rita and Northern Ry. is a malodorous proposition. H. and his gang have not put a dollar of their own money into it, but have scattered the securities in small lots all over rural New England and New York, selling them to clergymen, schoolteachers and widows mostly. Hemingway *et al.* do, however, own a connecting road in that same locality. The Central of Veragua it is called. Of course, they own it under cover, and operate it with a dummy directorate. As far as can be surmised, their plan is actually to construct this new road, but to rig it so that it goes bankrupt as soon as, or even before, it is finished. Then none of their small-fry investors will want to throw good money after bad, and Hemingway and the rest, still under cover, of course, will buy it up for a song and consolidate it with their own property. In brief, they will get a big extension of the Veragua Central System without paying for it.

They have been clever enough to make a bid for public confidence by getting a first-rate man to handle the actual construction of the Sta. Rita road for them (John Harding, you have doubtless met him down there). No one who knows him thinks he has the slightest part in or knowledge of the game. Indeed, I imagine he must give them many an anxious moment lest he build the road honestly and cheaply in spite of them.

However, they will get around him, for they are gentlemen who stop at nothing short of leaving a trail of good legal evidence behind them.

The Turner whom you asked about I could not learn anything of except that he has been variously employed by Hemingway for a number of years. Quite possibly he was sent down to watch Harding and interfere when he could. As to Hemingway's precise tactics it is hard to predict. Probably he will use the native government and officials to give the Sta. Rita road a black eye, and so ultimately to wreck it. One native, a prominent judge or something, called Saez, spent two weeks last Summer with Hemingway on his yacht.

Unfortunately H. is uncannily clever. One can be certain of all these things, but never be able to prove them—nor stop them.

The letter went on with some personal and family matters, which Carol skipped, and then ended:

On the whole, it strikes me that the quicker you get Ned to leave the Sta. Rita and Northern the better for him. It is, as I said, a malodorous affair.

Your affectionate cousin,
WM. J. KIRKE.

Carol jumped up, dressed hastily and ran down to Harding's office.

"Read this," she cried, as she burst in on him.

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Harding read it through slowly, turning back now and then to reperuse a few sentences.

"So that's it," he muttered. "So that's it."

He seemed to have become unconscious of her presence. He looked up.

"Well," he said gravely, almost sadly, "do you want Ned to leave?"

"Oh, you know it's not that," she replied indignantly. "When I wrote my cousin, asking about Hemingway, I said it was on account of Ned, but it wasn't really, it was——"

She suddenly found it difficult to go on.

"Yes," said Harding.

"It was—it was because I thought it might help you."

The gloomy fog, which with the reading of the letter had settled down on Harding glowed rose color for an instant.

"It was very good of you," he said. "Thank you." And then, "Will you let me keep this letter a while, please?"

"Of course," she answered, rising. "But aren't you going to do what it advises Ned to do?"

"What? Leave? With the power this puts into my hand?" He shook his head and smiled soberly. "Not yet, Miss Curtis. We'll fight them another round or two—with our eyes open now."

She went out.

Confident as Harding's words had been, the more he thought over it, the more desperate the situation appeared. He tried at first to persuade himself that the accusing statements in the letter were overdrawn, but the whole thing conformed to the facts with such devilish accuracy, and furnished a clear, logical explanation for so many puzzling and unreasonable occurrences, that he knew that what he read was the truth.

That knowledge brought with it profound discouragement. He had worked and fought unceasingly; he had become utterly weary in body and mind; but he had still fought on, upheld by his faith in ultimate victory and a vision of the day when his task should be triumphantly completed. Now he found that he was not wanted to win; that all things were so planned that he could not win.

All the fatigue and lassitude which Harding's superb fighting spirit had held off now descended upon him. It was as if some powerful hand seized him and wrung from his body every particle of his hard-held strength. His shoulders slouched forward, his head drooped, and his fingers played nervously with the papers before him. He sat at his desk, a picture of sheer exhaustion—a man too tired to fight longer.

And why fight? If it were a fair fight he would keep it up until he dropped and then let the best man win. But it was a fight against trickery, dishonesty and corruption, with the most treacherous villain of the lot lying in wait behind him, ready to betray him the instant he might gain an advantage.

If only, he thought, there was a particle of fair play in the whole wretched business; if only in the ranks of his enemies there were a single honorable antagonist; a single honest man.

"Ned!" Harding called sharply to his secretary in the outer room.

"Yes, sir."

"Tell them to saddle my horse. Put a hammock and blanket in the saddle-bags. I may be gone all night."

FROM the fact that the battle of the day before had taken place on the opposite side of the town, Harding surmised that El Chico's camp was no longer where it had been when Carol had spent the night in it. Of its actual location he had no more than a general notion.

Six in the afternoon found him riding in a drenching rain over a broken, hilly country of thick jungle, interspersed with small coffee and chocolate farms ten miles north of Sta. Rita. A dozen reports had told him that El Chico was somewhere in this district, but for three hours now he had been doubling back and forth across it without finding the insurrectionist's camp.

It would soon be dark, and Harding recognized that for him, not knowing the country, to attempt to follow the narrow, winding bridle-paths by night would be mere folly.

He stopped at the next house he came to. It was a dwelling a little better than most in that district, boasting of walls of split boards inside of the usual palm-tree shell, a roof of galvanized iron instead of thatch, and two steps leading up to the front door, which proved the existence of a board floor within.

"I'm lucky," muttered Harding, as he knocked.

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The door was thrown open instantly, as if he had been anxiously awaited. The man who stood inside, when he saw Harding's face, was unmistakably startled, though he sought to conceal it.

Harding said good evening and asked civilly if he could have shelter for the night: a request which in that country might never be refused. The man stammered, apologized, did not refuse, but made it plain that Harding's presence was far from being desired. So Harding asked the way to the next house, and then inquired if he knew the whereabouts of Don Enrique Fuentes.

"Right here, Mr. Harding," called a voice in English from the back of the room, "Come inside." And in Spanish, "Juan, bid the gentleman enter."

More astonished now than before, the man backed away from the door, and Harding, stepping inside, saw Enrique sitting at a table across the room.

The outlaw rose as Harding entered.

"You seek me, Mr. Harding?"

"Yes," answered Harding. "I hope I do not intrude."

"Not at all. Juan, a chair for the *señor*." Then, "Excuse me an instant, Mr. Harding."

He led Juan aside and whispered a few words to him. The man brought the chair and immediately left the house. As the door shut behind him, Harding had an instant's suspicion. He took off his streaming oilskin coat, then, as if to relieve himself of the weight, he unbuckled his revolver-belt and hung it on a peg in the wall. Enrique in silence and without ostentation slipped off his own belt and holster and hung it on the same peg.

"It is a cumbersome thing to wear in the house," he remarked. And then as he sat down, "You ride late, Mr. Harding."

"Yes. On important business."

The two men were silent for a minute, Harding paused to pick carefully his words, and Enrique, without any show either of undue expectancy or indifference, waited for him to begin.

"What I have to say, I warn you, is of a very personal nature, Don Enrique," Harding said at length.

"Pray proceed."

"I come to you as the real chief of this revolution. We know that Carlos Iriquidi, with his popular uprising, has arrived nowhere. If the movement succeeds it will be because of you and you alone."

Enrique inclined his head silently, but it was a mere indication that he had heard, and not any sign of assent.

"But Carlos Iriquidi put forward the issue on which the revolution was to be fought, and you have in all good faith adopted that issue and pledged yourself to it."

Again Enrique bowed without speaking.

"So that you consider yourself bound to expel my company from the country."

Enrique spoke. "That is already clear between us, Mr. Harding. Of what profit to discuss it further?"

"I have come to tell you that you have been imposed upon. Carlos Iriquidi first raised the cry: 'Down with the Yankee railroad!' The words were put into his mouth by another, and in the mouth of that other by still a third, and that last is himself an American and a rascal. He is using all of you as tools to throw out of his own way those of his fellow countrymen who will deal fairly with you, and put himself in secret control."

"You speak boldly, Mr. Harding."

"Because between honest men the matter is best handled openly, Don Enrique." Harding drew breath and began, "Don Antonio Saez——"

Enrique's eyes became mere flinty pinpoints.

"What has he to do with it?" he interrupted sharply.

Harding handed him Kirke's letter.

"This will show you," he said.

Enrique moved the candle nearer to his shoulder and read the letter slowly through. When he had finished he said:

"All this concerning Mr. Hemingway means nothing to me, nor his friendship with Don Antonio. Where is his connection with us?"

Harding answered:

"Don Enrique, I respect your silence. Don Antonio Saez has not chosen to show himself openly and you preserve faith, but I, knowing what I do, can see his hand in this revolution in a dozen places, and the hand of Don Antonio serves Don Antonio first. His own reward will be a position higher than he now holds—which will be—one can guess. And then through him this man Hemingway will be permitted to loot the country as he likes."

Enrique answered quickly—

"But you have for these facts only the

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word of one man, and he himself admits that they can not be proven."

"Nevertheless I know they are facts."

"What would you have me do?"

"Hold your hand until you and I can get at the indisputable truth. Once that is reached I shall be satisfied with your decision."

For a few moments Harding thought that he had swayed him, but then the answer came:

"Mr. Harding, in such a matter to hold one's hand is to slip back; to slip back is to invite destruction. I have begun and I go on without stopping to try to prove myself wrong. This is a revolution—a war—not a debating society."

"But—" Harding protested.

"There is no 'but'."

Enrique stood up and Harding rose and stood facing him.

The outlaw went on—

"Moreover we are bound to be antagonists because of something which counts for more than all the railroads in the world."

"My horse is still outside, I believe," answered Harding in a dry, hard voice.

Enrique flung open the door and called: "Juan, the horse of the *señor!*" and said to Harding, "The man will lead you to a house where you may pass the night."

When his horse stood ready Harding turned to face Enrique, waiting on the doorstep.

"Then it is fight?"

"It is fight, *señor*."

Harding turned, swung into the saddle and rode off into the inky night.

A few minutes after he had left, Enrique called softly in the direction of a near-by outhouse, and presently there appeared a man groping his way toward the light.

"Come, Don Antonio," said Enrique. "Forgive this delay, but since you are still unwilling to appear, it was necessary."

Judge Antonio Saez was in a fine temper at having been kept waiting a half-hour in the dark and under a leaky shed, and made no bones about showing it. Enrique seemed little perturbed, however.

"Calm yourself, Don Antonio," he said. "Sit down, take your ease. There are many things to be discussed, and a question or two has occurred to me which you may be able to answer; little doubts sticking in my mind which you will, I feel certain, be able to relieve."

XXII

HARDING was on the trail before daylight next morning. An hour after the sun was up he was at his desk.

His immediate task now was to prepare the vessel he commanded for the tempest which was sure to break, and though he knew she had small chance of riding it through, it was still his duty to see that all was snug and shipshape when it struck her.

There was much to be done: machinery not quickly movable, such as stone-crushers, donkey-engines and the like, to be put into condition to stand the weather; tools to be collected and stored; all laborers to be laid off and told that they would be paid in a few days, and American employees to be notified that their salaries would continue until some permanent arrangement could be made, and that meanwhile they were to serve as vigilance officers to check future disaffections among the natives and to prevent depredation.

Calmly, methodically, Harding issued all necessary orders to put his railroad in cold storage. Then he faced the question: What would be the end?

Yesterday when he had ridden out to seek Enrique Fuentes there had persisted a ray of hope. His plan had been first to induce Enrique to hold off and thus avert the most imminent ruin, and then to start a vigorous campaign to expose Hemingway and oust him from the control, and thus free himself from future dangers. Bad as the situation was, he had felt that, given a fair chance and assured that no further treachery would be employed, he might yet win. But he had failed to carry through the first part of the plan, and now there was no longer a fighting chance.

Carol Curtis! He resolutely attempted to keep his thoughts away from her, but they would not be bridled. When midday came he invited himself to lunch with Ned.

It was not a cheerful meal. Half way through it he announced gloomily:

"I'm afraid it's all up. I played my one trump card to no use. I can see no others in sight."

"You mean," said the girl quickly, "that you're ready to leave it all?"

"No, not leave it," he said, and his voice was that of a very tired man. "No, I'm in for it until the death. But I can see—" he

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spoke more slowly and each word seemed to cost him a mighty effort—"that I am sure to lose."

"Ah!" cried Carol quickly. "No, don't say that. You mustn't. Can't you see that, whatever happens, you are the same? You don't lose. They can crumple up the little railroad, burn it, destroy it, do what they like with it, but you, John Harding, the man, are not beaten."

He shook his head.

"You are comforting, but it doesn't change things," he answered.

Never had she so felt the power of the man as in that moment when he acknowledged defeat. She did not know what to say; she hesitated to meet his eyes, and gazed unseeing out of the window which faced her seat.

"Look!" she exclaimed presently. "There are the *rurales* you asked for the other day. They've come at last. It shows that the Government had made up its mind to help you anyhow."

Harding glanced out of the window and saw a half squadron of *rurales* halted in the road near the station.

"Small good they'll do us!" he said bitterly.

There came walking up the hill Jaime Saez, recently appointed a lieutenant in the *rurales* as a tribute to his father, the learned and patriotic judge. Harding started for the veranda to meet him.

"May we come too?" Carol questioned, and when he nodded she and her brother followed him.

At the top of the steps the spruce, effeminate-looking young officer clicked his heels together and gave a stiff military salute.

"Glad to see you, Don Jaime," said Harding civilly. "What is it?"

Jaime bowed and held out a paper to Harding, mumbling—

"Your servant."

Harding read it, while Jaime stood openly staring at Carol. Ned gripped the back of a chair and longed to break it over the fellow's head. Finally Harding said—

"This seems to be an order for my arrest."

Jaime answered with thinly concealed truculence—

"You have read it correctly, *señor*."

"When?"

"Now."

"You will, I presume, permit me to summon my lawyer?"

"I have no instructions to that effect."

"You will wait, however?"

"It is impossible."

Harding turned to Ned with a smile, half wry, half whimsical.

"Ned, the gentleman is in a hurry. Fetch me my hat, please."

Jaime stepped up to Ned as he started toward the door.

"Don't leave," he said. "For you," and he handed him another order of arrest.

Then he turned to Carol, made a sweeping bow, and said in sugary tones:

"Since the two gentlemen are my prisoners and can not leave my sight, may I so greatly molest you as to ask you to bring their hats? Believe me, it is a matter of great regret."

Carol never looked at him.

"What—what shall I do?" she faltered to Harding.

"Bring the hats, please," he answered.

Ned, tears of rage running down pale cheeks, stammered:

"Are you going to let him, sir? I can knock him out with my fists."

"No use, boy," whispered Harding kindly. "See those empty saddles down there? Where do you suppose the men are, eh? They'd be glad enough to get a chance to shoot us."

Carol brought the hats, and Harding turned to Jaime.

"*Teniente*, I am your prisoner, but I have not yet surrendered my gun." Jaime held out his hand to receive it. "Wait, I am not going to—now. I am your prisoner, and in five minutes' time I'll go with you. Meanwhile you will walk to the other end of the veranda, where you can see, but not hear."

Jaime shrugged his shoulders.

"Of course not. Come. There is hurry."

Harding gave him one long look in which the young man read the promise of a sudden death quite devoid of glory. He shrugged his shoulders again and said:

"Oh, very well. Five minutes, then."

Like his father he could wait.

In the five minutes' grace obtained, Harding labored to assure Carol that the arrest should not be considered serious, and that the matter would undoubtedly be straightened out as soon as he could get at the real authorities. More for the sake of

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his peace of mind than because she believed it, she appeared to be convinced.

He then scribbled two notes. One was to Wainwright, directing him to take charge in Harding's absence, and the other to Bill Healy, telling him to report to Wainwright, and enjoining on him most particularly the care and protection of Carol.

Then their hands held each other for a moment, and Carol kissed her brother.

"At your service, *Teniente*," Harding called.

As they walked down the hill there rose from folds and hollows in the ground a dozen *rurales* who had been lying concealed within easy shot of the cottage. When they reached the main body, which was waiting below, Jaime formed his fifty horsemen into two lines and ordered his prisoners to walk between them.

"No," said Harding flatly. "We'll ride."

Once more Jaime yielded, and, to save waiting for horses to be saddled, tumbled two of his troopers off their mounts.

They rode across the bridge and through the city, skirting the little park, until they came to the street in the rear of the palace. Just beyond was a big square building with heavily barred windows—the Sta. Rita jail. At the main door Jaime halted his troop.

"We go in here," he said.

"I demand to be taken before a magistrate," said Harding.

Jaime pointed to the massive door which had been swung open at the sound of the approaching cavalcade.

"My orders are to deliver you here," he replied. "Dismount and enter, *señores*."

They saw no official higher than a wooden-faced turnkey, who led them through many dark and narrow stone passageways to a cell. It was a room ten feet square, with a straw mattress on the floor, a wooden chair, a small barred window eight feet up, and four stone walls glistening with moisture around their bases.

Before the turnkey and Jaime left, Harding demanded that his lawyer be immediately notified and sent to see him; also that he himself be informed of the charge on which they were confined. His request was assented to; the heavy, iron-grilled door clanged shut, and they were alone.

Many hours passed. It became increasingly apparent that the jailer's promises to send the lawyer had been given merely to quiet them and to save discussion. Harding, to keep up the boy's spirits, made a fine show of keeping up his own. For the most part their talk was of things not connected with their present predicament. But in all of the long silences each of them was thinking of Carol, praying that nothing untoward would happen to her, and fearing that it might.

Late in the afternoon the turnkey brought them a single basin of beans, a loaf of bread and water.

"The lawyer?" Harding asked him. "Has he been notified?"

The man grunted and replied with a Spanish word whose dictionary meaning is "very soon," but which in common speech stands equally for "today" or "next year."

"And the charge? Are we to see it?"

"Very soon," repeated the turnkey.

Harding felt through his pockets and found a gold piece.

"Here," he said, giving it to him; "that you hurry."

The man weighed the coin in his hand and grinned at it speculatively. Then without a word he put it in his pocket and left the room.

"He's a demonstrative soul," remarked Harding.

The man came back ten minutes later with a dirty piece of paper scrawled over with pencil marks.

"A copy of the charge," he said, handing it through the peep-hole in the door.

Harding deciphered it with difficulty. It read:

"Wilfully and maliciously defrauding citizens of the Republic of Veragua—to wit: retaining from employees of the company under his charge money earned by and rightfully owing to them."

"Humph!" ejaculated Harding. "That'll never hold water. Not even in this country."

But though the jailer had given Harding the charge as it did in fact appear on the prison records, in a secret dossier of the police was another more grave: "Conspiring with those in rebellion against the authority of the republic." And overt acts were cited in proof; one, the intervention of the insurrectors during the riot at the station; the other, Harding's visit to Enrique.

Moreover, there was a still more serious charge against Harding, not reduced to writing. His crass rudeness had once killed,

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still born, an epigram of the learned Judge Antonio Saez, before whom his case would be tried.

XXIII

WHEN the doors of the tomb-like Sta. Rita jail closed behind Harding and Ned Curtis they vanished from their friends as completely as if they had been transported into another world. Of their fate no word came forth. Wainwright and Bill Healy spent the following day in the town, hurrying from one high official to another, subjected to long waits in deserted anterooms, the polite rebuffs of effusive underlings, the evasive explanations of Police Commissary this and Secretary so-and-so. At the end of the day they were utterly worn out, and they had not a single word of Harding or Ned.

They had called at the American consul's office, but this was closed. For the time being the government of the United States had no accredited representative in Sta. Rita. The old consul had been removed to a more important post and the new man was expected in about ten days.

Meanwhile the office was in charge of a clerk who had no qualifications save the fact that his uncle was a Congressman. At home he had been known as the village ne'er-do-well. In Sta. Rita he spent his time gambling and drinking with a group of disreputable American outcasts—the riffraff of the foreign colony. Hence the closing of the consulate.

Wainwright finally located him at the local club, playing pool in an advanced state of intoxication. He was not the least interested in Harding's plight. That, he said, was a matter for the new consul to attend to. When Wainwright attempted to press the urgency of the case he intimated that the two men were intruding.

They returned to Headquarters greatly discouraged, but before Carol they assumed a cheerful attitude, which, however, did not in the least deceive her, though she made them think it did.

After the arrests Wainwright and Bill Healy slept in Ned's room in the Curtis cottage at night, and Cavendish and two or three clerks from the station bunked on the veranda. Though they were all very busy it was contrived to have some one of them always about the house by day. This was in accordance with Harding's instructions. Carol was inclined to scoff at the necessity for such precautions, but the men, many of whom had had experiences in Latin-American countries in a state of political upheaval, knew that Harding was right and it was well to be ready for the unexpected.

The afternoon after the arrest, Carol noticed three or four natives loitering about the premises. They were poorly dressed and might have been laborers from one of the camps, save that, in addition to the inevitable machete, each carried a revolver. In an unostentatious way they appeared to be watching the house, and their stealthy espionage finally began to get on Carol's nerves. Whenever she glanced out of a window it seemed that one of these fellows would be standing in some half-hidden point of vantage, keeping an eye on the cottage.

Carol was not a nervous person and as she did not wish to appear silly, she refrained, for several hours, from confiding in Cavendish, who was her watch-dog for the afternoon. He was seated in a wicker chair on the veranda, enjoying a great treat, a month-old copy of the London *Times*, which he was devouring from the leading editorial to an obscure back-page paragraph about the birth statistics of Ceylon. He seemed wholly absorbed in his newspaper. But when Carol finally spoke to him, it appeared that he had been very much on the alert.

"I've had one eye on those johnnies, Miss Curtis," he said. "I can't quite make out their game, you know."

Peering between the hibiscus bushes outside of the screened porch, they could see three of the men sitting cross-legged on the edge of a cleared field, evidently engaged in some game, and a fourth leaning against a little shack that had once been used as a storehouse, not far away from the cottage. It was obvious that this man was acting as a sentry.

Cavendish dropped his paper and stepped outside. Between the time he left Carol's side and the time he closed the screen door the four men had vanished as if they were an illusion. Cavendish returned, blinking behind his horn-rimmed eye-glasses.

"Exclusive beggars those," he said with his air of naive seriousness. "One never knows what to expect in this part of the

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world, but I can't believe they'd dare attempt to get in here."

A burly Jamaica negro, probably one of the laborers who had been laid off, had come staggering out of the little *cantina* beyond the tracks and lurched toward the station. He stood there a few minutes, staring about him truculently, apparently muttering to himself, and then he gazed in the direction of the cottage and finally started toward it up the hill. The dirt-colored shirt he wore had been torn open, revealing his great chest. A naked machete was stuck in his belt. Carol and the young Englishman watched his advance apprehensively.

"It's pretty sunny on this veranda, Miss Curtis," remarked Cavendish. "Won't you find it cooler inside?"

Carol took the hint and went in. As soon as she had gone, the young man sprung open the cylinder of his revolver and looked to see that all the chambers were loaded.

Carol, from a window, watched the drunken negro mount the rise. About eighty yards from the house, the path wound through a miniature jungle of bushes and just as the fellow reached this a group of little men interposed themselves unexpectedly in his path. There were four of them. He stopped, then attempted to push past them.

They got in his way and his huge fist swung wide at one of them. The next instant he was sprawling on the ground with the little men on top of him.

The black Hercules reached for his machete. It was not there. Then, roaring like a bull, he shook them off and struggled to his feet, his great arms going like flails. But he was pounding the empty air. His antagonists had vanished.

The fellow peered about him in amazement. Not a leaf stirred in the brush. Save that his machete was gone it was as if he had imagined the four men.

He started forward again, and as he did so, a man appeared facing him in the narrow path. The man held a revolver and it was pointed at the negro's close-cropped head. There was a brief colloquy and Carol saw the negro's fist clench and unclench. The other man did not move. At last the black man turned and lurched off down the hill.

Carol hurried downstairs.

"I think I know now who they are?" she cried to Cavendish, and ran out toward the bushes.

Cavendish, astonished, hurried after her.

The man with the revolver had disappeared.

"Hello, there!" called Carol, "I wish to speak to you."

He came out of the bushes quickly, a fine-looking, wiry youth with coal-black eyes.

"I am at the disposition of the *señorita*," he said, bowing.

"Did Don Enrique send you here?"

"It is his wish that no harm approach the *señorita*."

"I wish you would thank him for me and tell him I am well protected here. It is not necessary to trouble him."

The youth bowed again.

"It is no trouble, *señorita*," he said. "Don Enrique has ordered it."

There was a certain respectful finality about his words, as if he were speaking of a decree of Providence, that made Carol smile and flush too. She thanked him. Then, partly to cover her embarrassment, turning to Cavendish, she remarked:

"It seems I am to be guarded like a princess."

Probably both Cavendish and the young native thought her the equivalent of one. At any rate El Chico's lieutenant bent low in courtly fashion, which was equal to calling her one, while Cavendish, who was not courtly in any sense and had betrayed considerable impatience over the interview, frowned silently at this Latin frivolity.

"Shall we go back now?" he asked, after a minute.

Carol acquiesced and bade good day to her cavalier. As for Cavendish, he observed that during the rest of the day Carol seemed more cheerful than she had been at any time since Ned's arrest.

The whole episode of the drunken negro was observed with great interest by a young man in the uniform of a lieutenant of *rurales* who stood behind the curtains of a window in the little *cantina* from which the negro had first emerged. The watcher was that doughty soldier, *Teniente* Jaime Saez.

When the negro started up the hill, Jaime was greatly elated. It was not that he had anything to do with the negro's movements. In fact the black had stumbled out of the front door of the place just as Jaime slipped in at the back. But

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Jaime scented a chance to rescue a damsel in distress. He was puzzled when he saw the negro stopped half-way up the hill, and more puzzled when he observed Carol run from the house, closely followed by Cavendish. His first elation was succeeded by disappointment.

When Cavendish returned to the cottage Jaime felt much aggrieved with the scheme of things. The young woman had too many watchdogs already.

In the absence of Ned and Harding the other gringoes were looking after her. That was perfectly explicable. But how about the native guardians, whom he recognized as El Chico's men? Jaime could not understand their presence. That Enrique might have a personal interest in Carol never crossed his mind. What such a man as Enrique wanted, he would take, and there was an end of the matter.

For a long time Jaime stared out of the window of the *cantina*, frowning, and twisting his little black mustache. He saw Carol and Cavendish go back to the cottage. He watched while Enrique's man vanished in the brush and later he noticed him and two others appear in a field not far from the house and squat down comfortably and engage, apparently, in some gambling pastime. Finally a smile drove the frown from Jaime's face. He had hit on the solution. The gringoes were paying Enrique to protect Carol.

Jaime called for a cup of coffee. He talked earnestly for a time with the man who ran the *cantina*. Then he sauntered out to his horse, which he had left in the rear of the house, and rode back to the town.

JAIME was three and twenty. He was adventurous. He was what he himself termed "*enamorado*," which is rather freely translated by the English words "in love." At the time of the arrest, Carol's fresh loveliness had smitten him hard. He had tried to convey his admiration in that brief interval with those expressive black eyes of his. On that occasion Carol's frigidity, instead of cooling his ardor, had inflamed it. After he got the two men safely stowed away, he told himself, he would return and make a capture on his own account.

Jaime's acquaintance with ladies from the northern republic had not been extensive. In fact it had been virtually limited to two lively *donnas* of the chorus of a comic opera troupe that had been stranded in Sta. Rita when the manager eloped simultaneously with the payroll and the star. On becoming acquainted with these two ladies Jaime had discovered a latent fondness for Anglo-Saxons of the fair sex. Of one or the other he had seen a great deal, enough to make him believe himself a connoisseur on the North American girl. From this acquaintance he made two general deductions. One related to what he considered the charmingly easy social code of young ladies from the northern continent. The other was that he exercised an irresistible attraction over these gringo women.

Of course he applied these generalizations to Carol. Now that the two girls of the chorus had drifted away, it was most opportune to run across Carol.

He had plenty of leisure on his hands. Don Guillermo, the *Commandante* at the barracks was ill and discipline was even more lax than usual. Don Guillermo, after the battle beyond the town, had retreated with his superior force in good order and had, therefore, been hailed by society as the savior of Sta. Rita. A series of dinners and entertainments in honor of the hero had followed and Don Guillermo's seasoned digestive apparatus had cracked under the strain. He had taken to his bed.

As for El Chico, he and his army had mysteriously vanished. It was said he was moving on San Pablo. It was also rumored that he was looting the construction camps of the new railroad, and another report had it that the revolution had collapsed. Nobody seemed to know exactly what had become of the revolutionary chief, but at any rate his army had withdrawn from the neighborhood and every officer of the *rurales* was a hero in the eyes of the doting *niñas* and their terrible mamas who strolled on the square every evening when the band played.

But Jaime now looked almost coldly upon the lovely *niñas*. He was thinking of Carol.

The day after the negro incident he rode out to the station again. Reports of a body of insurgents near one of the camps where some valuable machinery was stored had sent Wainwright packing out on the line with all his little force except Bil

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Healy, who was left to guard Carol, and a clerk or two at the station.

Presently Jaime, from his post at the *cantina*, saw Healy leave the cottage and walk to the station. Healy was looking for news from Wainwright. He entered the station and presently came out again and stood for a few minutes in front of the door, occasionally glancing toward the *cantina*, for it was a hot day and Healy had a thirst.

As he stood there Jaime stepped up to him and wished him good-day. The *commandante*, Jaime said, was anxious about the safety of the railroad headquarters, and if a guard was desired, he was empowered to offer one. Healy replied that they were doing very well, but he would submit the offer to Wainwright, the acting manager.

Jaime spoke of the oppressiveness of the weather and suggested a drink. Healy, after some hesitation, accepted, salving his conscience with the excuse that it was his duty to get on the right side of those greaser officials. The pair slipped over to the *cantina*. As their second drink was served there was an altercation outside between the proprietor and some hanger-on.

Bill Healy and Jaime both turned instinctively toward the door. Jaime was of the school of the suave and gentlemanly Lassigny of San Pablo. As he turned, his hand reached out and dropped something into Healy's glass. Presently the proprietor and the hanger-on carried Healy into an inner room and deposited him on a dirty couch.

About this time a ragged horseman on a spent pony trotted along the road and pushed up the hill. He rode up to the insurgent who was watching the house and handed him a note. There was a brief colloquy between the two men. Then the sentry disappeared and after a time he and his three companions could be seen mounted, galloping along the road away from Sta. Rita. The man who had brought the message sought an inconspicuous vantage point that commanded all roads to the house. Jaime watched all this from the *cantina* with satisfaction. He had written the note that sent El Chico's men flying to an imaginary rendezvous.

Proud of his own cleverness and feeling every inch a conquerer, Jaime mounted and rode to the cottage. Externally he was immaculate and splendid in his buff uniform with its scarlet facings and profusion of gold braid. A faint odor of perfume wafted from him. His little black mustache was waxed to two pin-points. His pointed boots were twin mirrors of black. When he dismounted in front of the cottage his high heels made him stand nearly five feet six inches. He squared back his shoulders, which were slightly padded, and knocked at the door.

Carol opened to him. As he knew, she was alone in the house. She recognized him immediately and, thinking that perhaps he brought some news of the prisoners, greeted him pleasantly.

"You have a message from my brother?" she asked. "Is he all right? And Mr. Harding?"

With a jangle of spurred heels clicking together, Jaime made a bow intended to be impressive.

"They are well," he answered as he stepped inside. "And I hope they will be with you soon."

"Then you have seen them?" she exclaimed. "They have sent some word?"

"Yes," he said. "And they send word that they are well. So I am here to reassure you. Don't worry. The arrest was merely a formality—a great molestation of course—but nothing to be feared."

"Thank you so much for coming to tell me," she said warmly.

His message delivered, Don Jaime seemed in no hurry to depart. He stood for a few moments, one hand resting negligently on his sword-hilt, the other stroking his diminutive mustache, and his eyes alternately roving over the room, and inspecting the girl. Carol was at a loss just what to do or say. At length he said:

"It must be dull for you, *señorita*, very dull here all day alone. No company, no diversions, no friends."

He spoke with a marked accent, sibilating the diphthongs and stressing the e's, so that it required Carol's closest attention to understand him, and a considerable effort to keep from smiling at his odd pronunciation. This, combined with his opera-bouffe appearance, quite prevented her from taking him seriously.

"Oh, yes," she answered lightly, "I get bored to death with myself."

"You are lonely?"

It struck her as a shade too impertinent,

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but she quickly reflected that she might use him to carry some message to Ned and Harding, so she replied good-humoredly—

"Oh, more or less, of course."

The play of Jaime's fingers on sword-hilt and mustache grew more and more rapid and nervous. Suddenly he threw both hands out with an appealing gesture and his little black eyes stopped their roving to blaze upon her hungrily.

"*Chica!*" he whispered. "*Chica!*"

The first feeling which Carol had was a mixture of utter disgust and a wild desire to laugh. She had not a particle of fear.

"*Chica?*" she repeated. "That means 'little girl,' doesn't it?"

"Yes," answered the perfumed warrior, drawing himself up to his full height so that his eyes might be nearly level with hers. "Yes, little girl."

"Then what is it you want, little man?" she replied.

Jaime promptly appropriated the "little man," as a term of endearment, just as he misread the odd smile which accompanied it. He reached forward to grasp her hand, which she immediately put behind her.

"Ah, *chiquita!*" he breathed ardently.

"Yes, little bit of a man," she paraphrased promptly, and instantly regretted it, for he burst into passionate avowals.

"I want to be your lover—to make you very happy—and myself. I want to show you how we men of the South can love, life of my soul."

She felt no amusement now, only profound loathing for the man.

He pressed forward on her and she retreated before him. Circling the room she made for the outer door, but he quickly jumped ahead of her and put his back against it. Then, locking it, he stuffed the key in his pocket.

He started after her again and she eluded him. There followed a minute of breathless dodging and scrambling about the room. Once he almost had her in those long, wiry arms of his, the strength of which she did not underestimate, but she did not so much fear the result of an actual struggle with him as she dreaded the indignity of having him touch her. So she maneuvered about the room, interposing between them chairs and tables and whatever came in their way.

"You'd better go," she gasped. "Mr. Healy—will be back soon—and then——"

The expression of Jaime's face told her that Healy would not come. Then she thought of Enrique's men. One call for help would bring them. She glanced through the window. The outhouse where the sentry had been standing was in plain view but the guardian was no longer there.

Perhaps Jaime read her thoughts.

"We are alone, *chiquita*," he repeated.

In one corner stood a heavy walking-stick of Ned's, more of a bludgeon than a cane. When, in her circling and dodging, this came under her hand she seized it, swung it back over her head and panted—

"If you come a step nearer, I'll break your head."

Either because he feared her threat, or because he appreciated that he was not cutting a very heroic figure, Jaime stopped. He changed his tactics.

"Come, I realize I have gone too fast," he said. "It is my ardor which has driven me. Let us sit down and talk over the matter."

He planted himself in the chair nearest him.

Carol remained standing.

"You will leave the house instantly," she ordered.

He sat still and answered:

"Come, come. Sit down with me and let us be sensible."

Carol, getting back her breath, also began to collect her wits, and to realize that by them alone would she be able to rid herself of him. She sat down at a safe distance.

"I am sorry I have been so hasty," began Jaime, "but it is the compelling power of your great charm. The fault is, after all, with you."

He smiled and, hand on heart, inclined his head toward her.

She did not acknowledge his remark by even so much as a change of expression.

Unabashed, he proceeded:

"But now let us talk more calmly. I will still the raging volcano within my breast lest you be alarmed," he went on fulsomely, but her blank, immobile face finally dried up his eloquence.

He was at a loss how to proceed. Then his fingers happened to touch in his pocket some pellets like the one that had simplified the problem of Bill Healy. He started slightly as if struck by an idea.

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"I beg of you," he said quietly, "that you forgive my impulsiveness. Something to prove that we are friends—say—ah, yes,—drink with me a glass of wine that may be for a toast to you and for you a sign of my pardon."

For a moment Carol did not answer. Then a spark of animation leaped into her eyes and quickly died out. She said:

"Very well. But will you get it? I feel a little faint. There are some bottles in this closet." She waved her hand toward a door at the side of the room.

Jaime sprang eagerly to his feet. He threw open the door and looked into a large, deep closet.

"In the back," said Carol, "against the wall."

He stepped inside and leaning over groped in the corner. Then quickly the light was cut off and he heard the door slam. Before he could spring back Carol had turned the key in the lock.

At first he managed to achieve a weak little laugh.

"Ha, ha, very good—a very good joke. I'm now your prisoner in every way. But please don't make it long."

There was no answer.

Gradually it penetrated his vanity that there was not a vestige of a joke in the business. At this he tried to break out, but the door was heavy and the lock strong. From that he fell to shouting and threatening, and demanding that he be instantly released under pain of the direst consequences. He stormed and raved and worked himself into a frenzy of rage.

All the time there was not a word or a sound from the girl. Finally, through sheer exhaustion, he grew quiet again, and after a few minutes her voice came through the door very calm and collected.

"Don Jaime, you have matches, I presume."

"Yes," he answered viciously, "and the desire to burn this house down."

"I wouldn't," she replied, "for you'll burn first if you do. Have you a pencil as well? If not you'll find one on the second shelf."

"I have one."

"Very well. Now light a match so you can see, and take your pencil and sign this piece of paper I slip under the door. Then I'll let you out."

On the paper Carol had written:

I, *Teniente* Jaime Saez, hereby express to the bearer of this my profound and lasting gratitude for releasing me from the closet in which she locked me when I became impertinent to her.

"Sign it and pass it back," she directed.

When Jaime read it he exploded with rage.

"I'll not sign it," he shrieked.

"All right," answered Carol. "Then you stay in there. Some one will be along presently, and no doubt you'll enjoy being discovered where you are. I might send for some of your friends. They would doubtless appreciate the honor of releasing you."

"I'll sign it," he said in a nasty tone.

When Carol had received the slip of paper with his signature at the bottom, she rattled the key in the lock. As she had anticipated, the door instantly heaved with Jaime's weight, as he sought to break out and overpower her before she could get out of his reach.

"Wait a bit," she called. "I've made a mistake in a word. Sign this one instead."

She slipped in a blank sheet of paper, and while he was stooping to pick it up, she unlocked the door.

"Now come out," she ordered, backing away.

The gallant soldier emerged, his little eyes blinking in the light. They blinked still more when he saw a revolver pointing at his head.

"Walk straight to the front door," ordered Carol, "unlock it, and *get out!*"

It was not until he was half-way back to town that it dawned on Jaime that possibly the English diminutive "little man" was not a term of endearment.

XXIV

FOR several days Ned and Harding shared the same cell, their only visitor the silent turnkey who brought their ill-prepared food and answered their questions evasively or not at all. No word came to them from their friends outside, and they could get no message out. They slept on filthy straw mattresses. The floor of their cell, which was below the level of the street, was always wet with seepage, and the air was polluted with an odor of mustiness and decay.

A keen anxiety about Carol they shared, but, in addition, Harding was compelled to

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support alone a sense of responsibility for the road and an abject feeling of failure. He had fought many stiff fights in the course of his career and had pulled through to success many a moribund and tottering enterprise. But this time, he realized, the job had collapsed completely. His imprisonment marked its final downfall. The conspiracies within and without had been too much for him.

He was not a sentimental man, but, as a true engineer, he felt for his work an affection that is best described as maternal. The Sta. Rita and Northern had always been like a sick child, and because he had had to fight for its life from the start, it was the more dear to him and its loss a more shattering blow.

Moreover, he was no longer a youth who could take failure with a shrug of the shoulders and go blithely to the next task that life offered. This wretched business smirched him. It would leave a stain on his good name that had been so many years in the building. People would say: "Harding? Oh, yes, he was mixed up in that shady affair in Veragua." This thought was like a knife in his side.

And then there was Carol.

Until the very moment of his arrest he had not realized all Carol meant to him. In those crowded weeks of confusion and struggle he had not had time to analyze fully his feeling for her But at that parting there had leaped into his mind the vision that she stood above his work, above success, above everything he held dear, and yet she was somehow the symbol of all these things. He had discovered how much, in that brief period, he had come to lean upon her capability, her cheerfulness, her unfailing sweetness. In those dark days she was a presence of intimate radiance. She had brought a new tenderness into his life.

These thoughts had flashed upon him, and in the same instant obtruded the image of Enrique. This man had come upon her in his hour. He had rescued her from peril, had made her see his strength, and would soon stand before her in all the glamour of his triumph—for Harding believed he would triumph. He would be governor of a rich province; probably, in time, dictator of the country. He was a man of power and vision. And his triumph spelled the final ruin of everything Harding had labored for. The very war cry of El Chico's revolution was "Down with the railroad!"

Harding felt that he could stand utter annihilation if it could save Carol from Enrique. The thought of her belonging to him was loathsome. Harding conceded the man's quality, he admired him, but Enrique was of the South and Carol of the North—in training, in thought, in all the conventions and essentials of life they were thousands of miles apart. Between them was an impenetrable barrier of race. But the girl did not see it. She seemed like one under a spell. And Harding was powerless to save her.

But, after all, was he fair? He thought of American girls who had married Japanese and were apparently happy. He had a second cousin who had wed a Porto Rican. Was the barrier impenetrable? Was he jealous merely? He harried himself with arguments and doubts.

Seated on the wooden chair in his cell he would think of Carol and feel himself doubly imprisoned. And yet it gave him a sort of melancholy pleasure to think of her. He laid little traps to make Ned talk of her, and then, in a panic lest the young man suspect his interest, he would abruptly change the topic of conversation. Ned would think: "How stupid of me. I am perpetually boring the old man with Carol."

The jail, for utilitarian rather than esthetic reasons, stood next to the palace. A narrow alley which separated the two was spanned by an enclosed bridge. On several occasions, in the course of the turbulent history of the province, a governor had breakfasted in the palace in the morning in the full enjoyment of his honors and position, and before noon had been marched across the bridge and lodged in a dungeon, a prisoner, perhaps condemned to death. "To cross the bridge," had become, in Sta. Rita, a phrase of sinister meaning.

The jail was a granite strong box, but the palace was architecturally more pretentious, a shabby copy of our own Madison Square Garden, without the tower. It fronted on the pretty plaza, the Parque de Doce de Mayo, and its rear façade, flush with the walls of the jail, faced on a broad street opposite the *cuartel*, or barracks, the huge stone-walled enclosure which housed the defenders of the city.

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The cell in which Harding and Ned were confined looked upon this street, or at least a high, barred window, the ledge of which the captives could gain with the aid of a chair, afforded a glimpse of the street and a section of one of the walls of the *cuartel* and one of its four massive wooden gates. Just outside of the jail was a stone-flagged esplanade. The cell floor was a few feet below the level of this, but the window-ledge was shoulder high above it.

Ned and Harding, to while away the tedium of confinement, would climb to the broad ledge and watch people walk by on the street, and they occasionally could see the head and shoulders of a sentry pacing along the crenelated wall, his carbine over his shoulder, his smart little cap worn at a rakish angle. After a time they got in the habit of keeping a sort of vigil at the window, but they looked in vain for the face of a friend. The only American who came within their vision was the consul's clerk, who went rolling past on the second afternoon. There was something in the alcoholic aimlessness of that consul's clerk which depressed them exceedingly.

Usually, unless the rats awakened them, they slept as late as nature permitted in the morning; for the impassive-faced jailer did not arrive with their coffee until the day was well advanced. But on the fourth morning they were roused about dawn by a sound of shooting.

Harding was out of his pallet on the instant and up on the window-ledge, with Ned close behind him. The space was not wide enough for both at once, but Ned, at the risk of his neck, stood on the back of the chair. The firing was not close at hand. At first there was no sign of life in the gray street. Then they made out a group of heads on the wall opposite, and soon the big door swung open and a troop of *rurales* plunged out and went off at a gallop in the direction of the shooting.

"What is it?" asked Ned.

"It must be Enrique," replied Harding. "He's attacking at last."

The gates closed, then reopened, and some belated troopers clattered after the others.

"What will it mean to us, Mr. Harding?" asked Ned.

After a pause, Harding answered soberly—

"Whatever it is, my boy, it can't be any worse than this."

The shots died away rapidly. The *rurales* disappeared from the parapet. Two old women with baskets tottered past, chattering as quietly as if an attack was the last thing to be expected in the world.

"Perhaps it was just a row somewhere," remarked Harding doubtfully.

BEFORE Ned could reply the quiet was shattered by a volley of shots much closer than they had heard before. The new firing seemed to come from a wider area than the other and the shots were in greater volume. It sounded as if a considerable force of men were engaged.

Presently the ripping sound of a machine-gun mingled with the uproar. Along the little strip of street on which they looked down civilians began to rush past, this way and that, like a colony of disturbed ants.

A *rurale*, scattering the crowd recklessly before him, dashed up on a sweating horse whose flanks were gashed where the spurs had torn him, and made a great clamor about the gate of the *cuartel*. Some servants, evidently from the palace, began carrying chests and boxes across to the big door.

"Looks as if we'd get some action here, Mr. Harding," remarked Ned, and his chief nodded.

Every minute the popping of the rifles and the crashing volleys came nearer.

"I think they're shooting from the palace, now," commented Harding.

More mounted *rurales* came galloping back and then others who crowded their horses close to the wall, turning and shooting their carbines as they came. On the parapet opposite, heads bobbed up and vanished and now and again a puff of smoke showed, but the bulk of the firing was on another side of the place.

The uproar was deafening now. The gate had been opened and the returning *rurales* were streaming in through it. Little groups of them, unmounted, came running over from the palace, trailing their carbines, to seek the shelter of the fortification. An inferno of sound came from beyond the palace. A fierce fight was evidently taking place in the plaza among the little toy pergolas, the trim lawns and the pretty tropical shrubbery.

Time and again the gates were partly closed, only to be flung open under the

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impact of a flying wedge of stragglers. But at last they were swung to, and Harding could hear the complicated system of bolts and barricades being adjusted. A capless officer of *rurales*, with blood streaming down his face from a wound on his head and dropping over his smart tunic, projected himself across the street and flung himself frantically against the unyielding gates. Then, as one in a daze, he drew his revolver and, leaning his back against the wall, stood there staring up at the palace windows and waiting for what fate offered.

Some of his men brushed past him and fled along the street and a few called to him to come, but he took no heed. After a time his pose lost its rigidity. His head drooped more and more. Then, with the ridiculous ease of a drunken man falling asleep, his body slumped slowly down upon the pavement.

Shouts and screams mingled with the shooting now. The palace was a volcano of sound. But for Ned and Harding the action was all "off stage." The street was deserted, save for the dead man sprawled out so clumsily. They could see no signs of life from the *cuartel*.

A door clanged somewhere in the interior of the prison. There was a rush of footsteps, the sound of high voices in the corridors, and silence. A dozen *rurales* broke past on the street, fleeing helter-skelter. In front of the window one of them appeared to trip. He fell and rolled over, started up, with an expression of anger, raised himself by a great effort to his knees, and then fell forward again and lay still in the middle of the roadway. Little mists of smoke eddied past the window and the air was tainted with a smell of burning powder. Then came a sharp crackling sound as of some one ripping apart a big packing-case.

"Hello!" cried Harding. "The insurgents must have taken the palace. That's a machine-gun."

The rattle of a volley sounded overhead, as if some of El Chico's men had gained the roof of the jail, and in reply came the thundering boom of a cannon from the *cuartel* and the shattering of stone and masonry somewhere. A number of aged bronze guns were posted along the *cuartel* parapet, and Harding supposed these were being brought into action. Another and another boomed its challenge at the besiegers. The machine-gun stopped abruptly. From the *cuartel* came a sound of cheering.

"Things are getting pretty warm," said Ned.

"Yes," replied Harding. "But I don't think they can take the barracks with rifles only. It may be a long siege. Enrique only commands a corner of the *cuartel* from the palace, I think, and the jail roof is scarcely higher than the parapet. He'll have to try tricks."

For a time the firing continued to din upon their ears. Then suddenly it abated. There was a long interval of silence, punctured by an occasional rifle-shot. Then a furious volley, an outbreak that seemed to rage all about the *cuartel*. For a long time the two watchers had not seen a human being save the two dead men in the street.

In the midst of the uproar Harding's ear caught the swift splutter of a gasoline engine. From the direction opposite the palace a big gray car, driven at reckless speed, shot suddenly into their sector of vision. As it passed it brushed the outstretched fingers of the man who had fallen in the middle of the roadway, and then it swerved toward the *cuartel* gate.

The speed slackened for an instant, as the gate was reached, and a large wooden box was flung out of the car, landing against the great doors. Then with a roar of the engine, the car leaped from view. The whole thing happened in an instant, so quickly that Harding and Ned might have doubted their eyes were it not for the box lying there before the gate. But the box was not all.

Suddenly Harding caught sight of what seemed a black cord attached to the box and twitching on the ground. The cord lay in the direction the car had taken and Harding, with a quick exclamation, stared sharply at the box.

"Down, Ned! Down!" he cried. "It's dynamite. They're going to blow in the gate."

Ned jumped to the floor, and Harding scrambled after him hastily. Together they crouched against the stone wall out of range of the window.

"I suppose that scoundrel Enrique got it from us after all," whispered Harding indignantly.

The crash seemed to be delayed interminably. Harding began to think that he had let his imagination run away with him

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about that black cord, which he had imagined attached to a battery in the motor-car, from which it was fed out on a spool.

"I'll get up and look," suggested Ned, after an impatient interval, but Harding restrained him.

"Wait," he said, taking out his watch. "We'll give the thing two min——."

What followed was not so much an explosion as an earthquake. The solid jail seemed to stagger and totter, and both men were sprawled upon the floor. The first deep roar was followed by the splintering of glass, the grinding and tearing of heavy masonry, the thumping and thudding of stones and débris hurled against the jail wall and the crashing of heavy objects falling within.

A big section of the plaster ceiling fell to the floor of the cell, and they found themselves choking and gasping in a fog of dust. Two more explosions, more remote, quickly followed the first. Harding guessed they were other gates.

As soon as they could get their bearings and assure themselves that the interior of the cell was still intact, they made for the window again. Where the gate had stood was now a great hole in the earth, strewn with fragments of wood and stone, though part of a shattered door still hung on bent and twisted hinges. The interior of the *cuartel* was shrouded in dust and smoke, and into this inferno a horde of insurgents poured, shooting and shouting as they scrambled through the pit dug by the explosive. Within, a fierce hand-to-hand struggle was apparently waging.

"They got in quicker than I guessed," said Harding thoughtfully.

The sharp ping of a stray bullet against one of the window-bars made him realize that their point of vantage was not the safest place for them. He and Ned dropped to the ground to wait until the outer world should become calmer. Then, in the ensuing interval of inaction, they began to realize that they were very hungry.

"I suppose the outlook for food is a bit gloomy this morning," remarked Ned regretfully. "The muddy coffee and soggy bread they give us here are not my notion of breakfast, but I could do with some now."

"So could I," assented Harding with a smile. "Just listen to those fellows."

From without came a fury of rifle and pistol shots, and hoarse cries and screams mingled with great scurrying and trampling and rushing. It was some time before the sounds of battle diminished and Harding thought it prudent to go to the window again.

When he finally took an observation the forces of Enrique seemed to be practically in possession of the *cuartel*. Some *rurales* were being marched out as prisoners, though in part of the barracks, hidden by the wall, the battle was still raging. Through the space where the gate had been he could see inanimate forms on the paved courtyard. Off in the distance a new fight seemed to be starting, or perhaps it was a rout of retreating *rurales* pursued by El Chico's men.

Presently, save for sporadic outbreaks on distant streets, everything became quiet. Enrique's men set to work barricading the gate, hiding from the view of the street that gruesome huddle of bodies. The morning lengthened toward noon and still no one came to them. Their hunger and disgust grew more acute, and the wooden-faced jailer with his atrocious coffee and beans would have seemed an angelic visitant.

At last a tramp of footsteps rang along the corridor. The cell door was flung open, and outside stood a slender young soldier in nondescript uniform whose sword marked him for an officer. Behind him they saw, lining the corridor, a file of men with rifles.

The man with the sword inclined his head gravely.

"The *señors* will come with me," he said in Spanish.

Harding looked past him dubiously at the men in the corridor. He found himself wishing they did not have their rifles. He fancied something sinister in the whole proceeding, though he told himself he was probably unnerved by the excitement of the morning and lack of food.

"Very well," he said finally. "Come on, Ned."

The officer led the way down the corridor and the men with guns marched behind.

XXV

HARDING and Ned were marched over the bridge to the palace, along vacant, silent corridors and passages, and finally into a long, empty reception-room. Up to the time they entered

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this room the palace was like a place that had been long deserted, and the echoing footfalls of their escort seemed a gross intrusion. But a glance at the big chamber afforded a startling contrast.

Violence was written all over the place, in the smashed gilt furniture, the splintered mirrors, the torn draperies, the broken windows, the wrecked chandeliers, the great gashes in the portraits of Veraguan notables on the walls, and in the numerous bullet-marks on the wall-paper and several dark stains, scarcely dry, on the thick carpet.

They walked the length of this room and into an antechamber, opening, through French windows, on a parapet. In the antechamber was Don Antonio. He was pacing to and fro with a somewhat worried look, but at sight of the two prisoners his face lighted up with a malevolent smile. Somehow, in that smile, he not only expressed hatred and contempt, but he also made them, for the first time, conscious of their soiled and ragged clothes, their griminess and their four-day beards. The young officer saluted the judge deferentially and, with a different air, indicated two seats for Harding and Ned. At this instant an attendant appeared at the window and asked the judge to step outside.

He stepped through the window and out of their sight, but Harding could hear his voice upraised in fulsome congratulations.

"The swiftness of your victory, when once you struck, it was marvelous, *señor general*. We of the city were wholly unprepared for such a speedy dénouement. But we have been sowing the seed here. Our people are ready. All the aristocracy of Sta. Rita will leap to our side."

Enrique's voice replied tersely.

Don Antonio went on in oily tones. A banquet had been planned for that evening —a few select leaders who could be trusted. They would discuss a temporary government, which would later be confirmed by the people. He enumerated those who were to be present, "among them Señor Lassigny, who has come over from San Pablo and is heart and soul with the cause."

Don Antonio went on—it seemed to Ned he was a little hurried and breathless—to explain the necessity of haste in setting up a new government, before the people had time to become restless and unruly spirits to foment disorders.

"Of course, I am personally reluctant to leave my quiet judicial study for the noise and clamor of the political life," he declared. "But you gentlemen insist on putting the burden on my shoulders, making the appeal of duty and patriotism, so, lest I might seem a shirker——"

His well-modulated tones died to a murmur as the two men moved farther from the window. Ned glanced at Harding and saw that his face was set and hard. Indeed, in Harding's mind, the situation could not have been worse. Lassigny, a slimy scoundrel; Saez, the corrupt judge whom Harding had balked and defied; Fuentes, who had no cause to love him—there was a triumvirate to be feared. For Fuentes he had a certain respect, but he knew the other two would stop at nothing—no, not assassination even—to attain their ends. Harding wondered, if they thought him sufficiently in their way, how much his life was worth at that moment. Very little, probably.

He glanced at the young officer lounging near the doorway and then his eye roved over the room. There were but two exits, one the door they had entered, the other the French window. The file of armed men had not come into the room but Harding could hear them moving about and talking outside. If it came to a struggle there—but, what nonsense he was thinking! Don Antonio could be trusted not to do anything so crude.

Suddenly he caught the voice of Fuentes in an outburst of sharp Spanish. Then Don Antonio could be heard expostulating and protesting loudly. Harding could not catch the words, but it seemed to him the man's tone had the quality of terror. His voice died to a mumble and then came a scream such as one might hear from some feline creature caught in the jaws of a trap. The young officer was on his feet, his hand gripping his revolver, and his men were crowding in at the door, staring toward the window.

Rapid footfalls sounded on the terrace outside and the lithe figure of Enrique appeared in the window. He was dragging Don Antonio along, holding him clutched in one hand by the scruff of the neck, as one might carry a kitten. The judge's face was pasty white and his black eyes were rolling with terror. Fuentes flung him contemptuously on the floor at the young officer's feet.

"*Teniente*, take him across the bridge and

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see that he is housed safely," he ordered.

The lieutenant assisted the prone man to his feet. The judge's collar had been ripped off. He seemed bereft by fright of all power of locomotion and his teeth chattered audibly. He stretched out to Enrique a hand that was tremulous as the hand of a very old man.

"If you would have the kindness—the pity," he stammered in a cracked voice.

"Across the bridge!" repeated Enrique, and the lieutenant pushed the judge from the room.

Enrique turned to Harding and Ned. The stains of battle were still on him. His blue jacket was spotted and torn; his boots and trousers were plastered with mud from hard riding and his unshaven face was smudged with powder and dirt, but he still preserved his manner of a grand cavalier.

"Will you step outside, gentlemen?" he said quietly. "I regret keeping you waiting."

The parapet was narrow, rather long, two stories above the street. At one end stood some chairs and a table where Enrique apparently had been eating. Near the French window stood a negro armed with pistol and machete, and another guard—white—was pacing slowly to and fro with a carbine over his shoulder.

Below lay the little park. Enrique's men had charged across it to capture the palace, and now its lawns were trampled to mud and great gashes torn in the shrubbery. A few squares beyond lay the wharves and then the waters of the harbor, dark gray under a lowering sky.

On a distant rocky point the ancient castle, the guardian of the city's roadstead, loomed up as a great hulk of stone. The engirding mountains, along a curve of coast, were half hidden by showers that hung along their flanks like streamers of lace.

As they stepped through the window a sudden uproar of cannon burst out from the distant fortress. Enrique took a pair of field-glasses from the table and stared through them and while he gazed a trim, white vessel poked her nose around the point.

"They're saluting her," said Fuentes presently. "Some sort of warship. What do you make of her, Mr. Harding?"

Harding took the glasses.

"I can't make out her colors," he said. "But the saluting battery flies the American flag. She must be one of our converted gunboats."

Enrique gazed through the glasses again.

"She looks more like a private yacht," he said doubtfully. "If they're wasting good ammunition—" Then, with a sudden change of manner, he added: "But you haven't breakfasted. I can see it in Mr. Curtis's eye. Here, Pedro, bring more breakfast. And fetch some water, soap, towels."

The negro hurried out.

"Your sister is well, Mr. Curtis," continued Enrique. "As soon as the city gets quieter, you may ride out to her. At present it might be dangerous for any one connected with the railroad to appear in the streets. Meanwhile, for an hour or so, I shall take the liberty of detaining you here as my guests."

"Then we are—released," put in Harding quickly.

"Of course," said Enrique. "Your arrest was not my affair. I suppose it was engineered by that scoundrel Don Antonio."

He glanced again at the vessel which was steaming slowly into the harbor. Then, motioning them to chairs, he continued:

"After our little talk about Saez, Mr. Harding, I decided to keep an eye on him. After a few skirmishes I disappeared for a few days. My object was twofold. First, I needed dynamite to open the *cuartel* to my men. This necessitated a journey nearly all the way to San Pablo."

"Then it wasn't our dynamite?" put in Harding.

"Not after that—that little incident, Mr. Harding. I got it from the Central of Veragua. Unless I'm greatly mistaken they haven't missed it yet."

He smiled in a reminiscent way and then went on seriously.

"My other reason for delay was to get a line on Don Antonio. One of my men was in his household, a sort of butler, a very intelligent fellow, too. Well—Don Antonio and his friends talked—about me. It seems they found me a little too conspicuous."

Enrique smiled again and lighted a cigarette.

"Yes," said Harding.

"There was to be a dinner at Don Antonio's house tonight, ostensibly to discuss the establishment of the new government, but really in my honor—in fact it was

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planned to let me end my career in aristocratic company. Señor Lassigny, you know, is very clever with poisons. But his cleverness is superfluous now—the fools!"

His eyes had grown hard as stone.

With a gesture he indicated some papers scattered on the table.

"Don Antonio's private correspondence," he said. "It confirms your story of a conspiracy between these gentlemen and certain officers of your railroad. They were to smash the road, and then the Central, which they controled, was to get it. A very pretty plan. One of your engineers was playing a minor role in the game.

"Turner?" said Harding.

"Yes. After the thing was put through the plan was to portion out big concessions of land, to drag the wealth out of the country and divide the loot—for the workers, the *peons*, slavery; for the conspirators, wealth." He brought his fist down on the table with sudden emphasis. "Sta. Rita is through with such railroads, gentlemen!" he cried.

He paced to and fro moodily for a time and then turned suddenly upon Harding.

"Where does this leave you, *señor?*" he asked suddenly.

"Where I was before," replied Harding slowly, "except that then I was fighting against hopeless odds, and now, it seems, the fight is over. Of course, I was simply doing my work in good faith."

"If I did not know that, you would not be here," interrupted Enrique. He took another turn the length of the parapet and again faced Harding. "If you went to New York, could you get some one, some legitimate person with capital, interested in the road?"

Harding thought for a minute.

"I'm afraid not," he replied. "I have no financial connection. I'm just an engineer."

"It's too bad," said Enrique. "So much time, so much labor wasted. If we could get the road built and run, as you say in the States, 'straight.'" He sighed and then shrugged his shoulders. "I have only an empty treasury here," he said, and repeated, "It's too bad."

The white steamer had come to anchor in the harbor and a launch was putting off. The vessel was so close now that they could see it was not a gunboat, but a yacht. Enrique looked at it through his glass and again turned the glass over to Harding. Three men sat in the stern of the launch. Most conspicuous was a tall individual in the garb of a clergyman. The others were a little, elderly gentleman and a youth. Harding, in response to a question by Fuentes, said he did not know them.

Attendants appeared with coffee, eggs and hot rolls, and a basin with water and towels. Enrique bade them set the table in the anteroom, as a shower was gathering and the first raindrops were beginning to patter on the parapet.

"I shall leave you to your breakfast, gentlemen," he said. "As soon as it is safe, I shall send a guard to escort you through the town. Meanwhile, make yourselves at home. I shall try to find some soap and water myself."

He bowed and left them.

Ned and Harding reveled in the luxury of soap and water and then sat down to the first real coffee and decently prepared food they had enjoyed in four days. They ate with the zest of half-starved men, but at last their desire was satisfied. The attendant brought them cigarettes and they sat back talking over the exciting morning and thinking impatiently of getting back to the station. Ned suggested, after a time, that they surely were at liberty to set out, but Harding was more cautious.

"Enrique is not a man we can afford to offend," he said. "He promised to send us word when we could leave safely, so we'd best wait."

A few minutes later footsteps sounded outside the door leading to the reception chamber and Enrique appeared. He was now clean-shaven, clean-booted, dressed in immaculate white. Accompanying him, were the clergyman Harding had seen leaving the yacht, and the rather insignificant-looking elderly gentleman.

"This is Mr. Harding, *señors*," said Enrique. He introduced the Rev. Ethelbert Simmons and the elderly gentleman, whose name Harding did not catch.

The clergyman stared at Harding and started back with an exclamation of disappointment.

"You surely didn't expect to find Mr. Harding dressed like one of your ushers, Simmons!" exclaimed the elderly gentleman crisply.

Something in his tone caused Harding to observe the man more closely. He was

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a shriveled little person, with tousled gray hair and an unkempt mustache which dropped over a thick cigar. His clothes looked as if he had slept in them, though, at the same time, they had an air of the Fifth Avenue tailor. But his distinguishing feature was a pair of light brown eyes with a glint of laughter in them and these he screwed up at Harding with a sort of bird-like air of observation.

The clergyman did not reply to him immediately. Instead he flung himself into a chair and began mopping his face. He was a plump man and perspiration was streaming down his pink cheeks.

"Do you know how much time you waste a year shaving, Simmons?" continued the elderly gentleman leering at Harding again. "One hundred and twenty-two hours. And all over a matter of worldly vanity."

"Phew! What a country!" ejaculated the clergyman.

Harding looked impatiently toward Enrique for some explanation of these strange guests, but the revolutionary chieftain had departed as abruptly as he came.

"You gentlemen wished to see me?" he asked.

"For that puspose," replied the clergyman in a ringing tenor voice, "I have come twenty-five hundred miles."

XXVI

ALL through the fighting around the *cuartel* and palace Carol Curtis was beside herself with fear and anxiety. Were her brother and Harding still prisoners or, perhaps having been set free, had they been caught in the swirl of the battle? Or would the victory of either side loose a saturnalia of blood-lust which might spell death to the two Americans? Or had the building in which they were confined been destroyed and they perished helplessly in its ruins? These and a thousand other possibilities ran through her mind.

As soon as the news came that the insurgents had won, and quiet was being restored, she insisted that Wainwright take her over to the town. They went to the Grand Hotel, where he obtained a room for her, and then himself went across the plaza to the palace to learn what he could of Harding and Ned.

He had not been gone ten minutes when a servant announced to Carol that a gentleman waited below to see her.

"Send him up," she directed, not caring to go to the public rooms of the hotel.

A minute later there was a knock; she answered "Come in," and there entered, not Wainwright whom she had expected, but Enrique Fuentes.

He bowed with the exaggerated courtesy he had always used toward her—an exaggeration which in him bore no hint of the ridiculous. He said:

"Miss Curtis, for many hours I have been thinking with dread of how great must be your alarm. Now, at the first possible moment, I hasten to quiet your fears."

"My brother?" she asked quickly. "And——"

"He is free, well and safe. In a short time you will see him."

"Thank Heaven," she answered earnestly. "How was it done?"

He smiled.

"I am the supreme authority in Sta. Rita now. Naturally your brother is not a prisoner."

"Thank you—I can't say any more. And Mr. Harding?"

"Of course he is also at liberty."

There surged over her an immense gratitude and admiration for the man. He was always there when help was the most needed. Twice he had rescued her from peril; again, just the other day, he had saved them all; and now he had restored to freedom Harding and her brother. And always his concern was lest she be distressed or annoyed; of his own risk of death he thought nothing. She stood a few moments trying to frame her gratitude, but before the words came to her he began to speak again.

"The last time you saw me, Miss Curtis, you spoke to an outlaw. Today I can stand before you a free man—one with certain prospects."

"Ah, I know that. They will make you Governor, won't they?"

He smiled whimsically.

"I am already Governor, made so by myself a half-hour ago. There lacks only the confirmation of the President, which will not be wanting. And from Governor one may travel still farther."

"Let me congratulate you," she said, holding out her hand unaffectedly.

"Thank you, but so far it is nothing. I

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have not yet won that which I prize more than anything on earth."

She knew what he meant; knew that she should have fended him off, yet something made her say—

"And that is?"

"You."

She suddenly grew very weak. He stood before her silent, very straight, calm as may be the outside of a vessel holding molten metal; and the love and tenderness which shone forth from his gray-black eyes seemed to enfold and hold her fast. The physical presence of the man dominated her and robbed her of all power of consecutive thought.

She threw out both hands as if to ward him off. But the words which instinct told her she should speak would not be uttered.

"Wait," was all she could say.

He answered—

"Through an eternity, if you will promise me ten minutes' happiness at its end."

The ardor in his eyes was like a glowing flame, and now it flared up and leaped across the space between them. It suffused her until her whole body tingled and grew warm. She lowered her eyes and swayed a little on her feet, and he took a quick step toward her.

"No! No!" she cried, retreating. "Wait! Oh, please wait!"

Again they stood silent, only a pace apart. She no longer dared to meet his eyes, for she knew that if she did, the next instant she would be in his arms; nor did she know what restrained her. Her thoughts were a mere chaotic turmoil. She longed to let herself go; to give way to the overpowering force she could feel dragging her toward him; to let him possess her; but yet she feared.

A little shred of reason that somehow remained afloat on the torrent of her sensations told her that she must make very sure of herself before she yielded; that all life could not be lived on the crest of a wave of feeling; that she must consider the long, quiet stretches which were to come.

But consider she could not while he stood there so close that he could touch her and there flowed from him to her that which drove all thought away.

With a great effort she faltered:

"Stay where you are, please. I must think."

With a still greater effort she turned about and walked slowly to the other side of the room and there stood gazing out of the iron-barred window. But of what was before her eyes she saw nothing. She was only conscious of the man in the room behind her.

And she felt a great weariness. After all, why did she struggle? Why did she not give herself to him? Was it because he was a man of an alien race, a race she had been taught to think inferior? But what of it? Was he not as true, as noble, as brave, as honorable as any man of any race? Did he lack any of those qualities with which all her secret dreams and imaginings since girlhood had endowed the man whom she should some day marry? Did he not love her truly enough to make happy and peaceful all those long, quiet stretches as well as to set her aflame as he did now?

Very slowly she turned about and reached out her hand——

A RIFLE-SHOT rang loudly in the street below; and out of its echo a dozen more. Carol, affrighted, jumped away from the window. Enrique ran toward it.

"What is it?" she cried. "More fighting?"

"No. There is no danger. It's all over," he answered. "The fools!" he added.

She came back to the window and looked out. A dozen of Enrique's ragged troopers were clustered about a body which lay in the middle of the street. One of them poked it tentatively with his foot, and the body did not move. She saw it was Judge Antonio Saez.

"Did—did they murder him?" she asked in a whisper.

"No," he answered. "No, it was not that."

He went to the next window, which gave on a little balcony, and stepped out. One of the men saw him and called up with a grin.

"We finished him for you, *Jefe*."

Enrique replied with a torrent of angry Spanish, which poured out too fast for Carol to follow.

The men picked up the body and shuffled away with it."

"What was it?" asked Carol when Enrique returned to her.

He hesitated an instant, and answered—

"He tried to escape."

There sprang into Carol's mind something

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she had heard about the old Spanish *ley fuga*, the time-honored custom of turning loose an inconvenient captive and shooting him as he runs.

"It was planned that way?" she asked.

Enrique, enraged at the interruption, did not yet fully understand its effect on her.

"Yes," he said impatiently. "But not to happen under your window."

"And planned—ordered by you?"

Then, when it was too late, he saw, and seeing, was swayed by savage anger at the man who even in his death had played him this scurvy trick.

"He was a traitor," he said. "A contemptible traitor. He deserved nothing else."

In the tone of his words, as hard and relentless as the gleaming steel of a drawn sword, and in the look which rested for an instant in his eyes, she found that which she had feared, not knowing what it was. For half a second Don Enrique Fuentes, the cavalier, was hidden, and she saw El Chico, the bandit chief, implacable, ruthless, relentless.

She recoiled, not from fear of him, but at the thought of how nearly she had been swept away by him. The shock was like that to a man burning with fever who is suddenly plunged into an ice bath. She trembled; she felt an almost irresistible desire to cry out or to laugh. Her fists clenched, her whole body grew rigid with the supreme effort she made to retain her self-control. She said:

"Don Enrique, I owe you as much gratitude as any woman may to any man. I admire you. I respect you. But I can never marry you."

He refused to accept it, and pleaded fiercely with her; but now all the charm and power and magnetism which five minutes before had so nearly won for him, were useless. She listened with jangling, overstrained nerves, her one desire to be alone.

"No," she answered. "No, it is final. There is no use persisting, now or later. Believe me, when I say it can bring only pain to me and unhappiness to you."

He looked at her face, vainly trying to read there some contradiction of her words. There was a little silence. Then he took her hand, raised it to his lips, and said:

"Nevertheless, I am and ever shall be your servant. Of that privilege you can not rob me."

He walked quietly to the door. It closed behind him and she heard his muffled footfalls along the corridor. For a minute she stood staring at the door in a sort of horror, her hands clutched over her bosom. Then suddenly she flung herself upon a chair and her body was shaken with sobs.

XXVII

"I HAVE come to Sta. Rita," explained the clergyman, "as the representative of a committee of bondholders of the Sta. Rita and Northern Railway, to look into the status of the road."

"You are representing Mr. Hemingway's interests?" asked Harding quickly.

"Not exactly," put in the elderly gentleman. "I suppose you are a friend of Mr. Hemingway's?"

"I am an employee."

"In his confidence?"

"No," said Harding. Then he added with deliberation, "So far as my knowledge goes, Mr. Hemingway is a swindler and a scoundrel."

"Quite right!" exclaimed the elderly gentleman.

He lighted a fresh cigar and tossed the old one, of which he had smoked about an inch, into a corner.

"Mr. Hemingway," continued Harding, "has not only swindled many gullible persons out of their savings, by wrecking a good piece of work, but he has gone further in swindling his own laborers. The men attacked our headquarters, in a drunken mob, and in order to save our lives we were compelled to shoot some of them."

"Oh!" exclaimed the clergyman.

"The fact that they were, in a way, right, didn't make it any easier. Each poor devil that died there was murdered by Hemingway just as truly as if he had pulled the trigger himself."

"I always make it a practise of firing any of my managers who can't get along without killing his men," said the elderly gentleman thoughtfully. "It's bad business—bad business. I think we shall understand each other, Mr. Harding."

The Rev. Dr. Simmons turned to Harding with an expression of horror.

"Surely you could not think for a moment that I, a clergyman, had any connection with this scoundrel?" he cried.

"I merely wished to make my own position clear," replied Harding.

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"Perhaps we should explain ourselves more thoroughly," said the elderly gentleman. "Our presence here is due entirely to a secret passion for gambling on the part of my reverend friend."

"My dear sir!" protested the clergyman.

"Oh, we all have our little vices, Simmons, even the clergy," continued the other imperturbably. "Mine are ancient ceramics and cigars. Yours, my dear Simmons, are, let us say, wildcat investments that promise twenty per cent. dividends."

He lit a fresh cigar from the scarcely burnt stub of the old one and, addressing Harding, continued:

"If my excellent friend had come to me, I could have steered him into some solid five per cent. investment. But his passion led him astray. He fell for Hemingway. He entrusted his savings to Hemingway. And it wasn't until recently that he became suspicious of this great enterprise."

"A certain Mr. Kirke—" began the clergyman.

"Oh, yes," interrupted the older man. "I must not do Dr. Simmons an injustice. Doubtless his trust in Hemingway would still be unshattered, had not this man Kirke begun an investigation into that gentleman's activities which came to the ears of my reverend friend and his equally trusting fellow lambs—investors, I mean. Kirke was a lucky accident. I can't quite figure out what brought him in."

"He was not entirely an accident," cut in Harding, and told of Carol's correspondence with her cousin.

"As a result of Mr. Kirke," resumed the elderly gentleman, "a committee was formed, of nervous bondholders, and Dr. Simmons was made chairman. He had no more idea what to do in that capacity than the man in the moon, so, at last, he came to me."

"I admit—"began the clergyman.

"Of course you do," went on the other. "I hope it will be a lesson to you. Well, to make a long story short, Mr. Harding, about this time my doctor decided I was working too hard. He prescribed a long sea-voyage and cut me down to two cigars a day." He smiled naively at his cigar and then began to puff at it rapidly. "I had been having some correspondence with a German Jew in Lima who was trying to interest me in his collection of Incan pottery. So I decided to take a run down to Lima on my yacht, and, if Dr. Simmons wished to accompany me, he could stop at Sta. Rita on the way and look into this alleged railroad of his. So here we are."

He stopped to light a fresh cigar.

"I suppose that Incan collection was probably made in Newark," he remarked drily. "But I couldn't resist a look at it."

All the time he had been speaking, Harding was racking his brains to discover who the man was. His face was as familiar as photographs of Gibraltar or Niagara Falls, and yet somehow his identity eluded Harding. At first Harding thought he might have seen him in Hemingway's office, and this idea had quickened his suspicions. But the man was obviously not connected with Hemingway.

As he stopped speaking and glanced across at Harding with his whimsical, birdlike expression, his name flashed into the engineer's mind. It gave him a shock of wonder and amazement, which gave way to an eager hope. This man in Sta. Rita! This man interested, even in an indirect and fortuitous way, in the affairs of the railroad! It was incredible! It was too good to be true!

But the man's identity was unmistakable. Harding realized that there probably were remote persons unfamiliar with the physiognomy of George Washington, or Napoleon, who would immediately recognize this man. Surely one could not turn over the pages of the illustrated weeklies from the States in the Sta. Rita club without coming upon at least one photograph of him.

"You," exclaimed Harding, leaning forward excitedly in his chair. "You are John Holloway, the banker?"

"My name is Holloway," said the little man with a chuckle, "and I am a banker."

"I didn't know," gasped Harding, for an instant overcome by self-consciousness in the presence of the man who, he knew, thought in terms of millions.

The clergyman had been fumbling with some papers and muttering something about credentials, but now he put the papers back in his pocket.

"Of course, if you know Mr. Holloway, we can dispense with further formality," he suggested.

He glanced inquiringly at Holloway.

"Suppose you give us a general outline of how the work stands, Mr. Harding," said the banker, looking quizzically at Harding.

Harding hesitated in obvious embarrass-

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ment under the little man's expectant gaze.

"Of course I know Mr. Holloway," he said finally. "But nevertheless I am a confidential employee of this road. Perhaps you'd best let me see the credentials."

"But surely—" began the clergyman protestingly, when Holloway cut him short with a little chuckling laugh.

"Hand over the papers, Simmons," he said. "Mr. Harding has no right in the world to give any information without seeing your authority."

Harding took the papers and looked them over quickly.

"I am at your service," he said.

"Now about the status of the work?" said the banker.

Harding explained in detail the progress of the construction work. At his first words his embarrassment fell away. He was now on his own ground, and he spoke with the lucidity of a man whose exposition of a sitation proceeded from his ability to mold it. Holloway listened impassively, from time to time nodding his head. Only once did he interrupt the narrative. He had been fumbling through his pockets for a fresh cigar, and, not finding it, his face became overcast with an expression of dismay.

"Just a minute, please," he said, and then called sharply: "Harry! Smokes!"

A young man, obviously a secretary, appeared promptly from the outer room with a box of cigars. Holloway stuffed about two dozen in his pockets, put one in his mouth, and signaled Harding to continue.

"Now, about freights," he asked when Harding had concluded. "What are your traffic possibilities?"

This was a subject on which Harding could speak with enthusiasm. His head was crammed with data. He set forth no vague, general statements, but reports and statistics relating to the timber and mineral wealth of the territory, and acreage, actual, projected and possible, of sugar, coffee and other crops, together with the average freight tonnage per acre from each. In the midst of his explanations, Holloway cut him short with an abrupt question.

"This new governor, Fuentes, is he straight?"

"I can say he is the squarest native I have met," replied Harding. "He's always acted in good faith with me. Whatever his motives, he's head and shoulders above any of his predecessors."

"And can he hold down the job? Or is there likely to be another revolution next month?"

Harding laughed.

"He's the strongest man in the country, and the mass of the people worship him. Yesterday he was an outlaw; today, governor of the province; some day, perhaps, president of the Republic."

"I'm glad he's not in Wall Street," said Holloway with a smile.

Thereafter Harding thought the banker seemed to lose interest in the subject. He leaned back in his chair, staring dreamily into space and occasionally humming softly to himself between periods of spasmodic puffings at his cigar. Finally, with a word of excuse, he went out to his secretary.

Harding was nonplussed. He continued his explanations, for the clergyman's benefit, but his thoughts kept turning to Holloway. Obviously he had not impressed the banker. He kept cudgeling his brain, trying in vain to discover wherein he had failed.

Harding concluded, and the clergyman was asking some desultory questions when Holloway returned, looking somewhat bored.

"Well, Mr. Committeeman," he said to the clergyman, "you've got your information now. Your great investment has ended in smash-up, and Mr. Hemingway, though part of his little scheme has been spoiled, has made away with your money at any rate. You'd best take your loss like a man and, in financial matters, resolve to turn over a new leaf."

Dr. Simmons' face fell.

"If I could only think of some plan," he began.

"You might be able to get Hemingway arrested," went on the banker, "but I doubt if you could convict him, and as for your money——"

He snapped his fingers in the air.

"My savings!" murmured the clergyman, his face working.

"Personally, I make it a rule never to go into South American enterprises," said the banker. "I think you'll find it a good one." He sat down and bit off the end of a fresh cigar. "Of course, to every rule there are exceptions."

"If Hemingway—" began the downcast clergyman.

"I have just sent two cablegrams," interrupted Holloway. "As the result of one, I fancy Mr. Hemingway will sleep in the

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Tombs prison tonight. As the result of the other, Simmons, with the aid of the proxies in your possession, I should be in control of both the Central of Veragua and the Sta. Rita and Northern roads, at the latest, by three o'clock tomorrow."

Harding and the clergyman both cried out together.

"Doubtless it is a very silly thing to do," said the little man, screwing his glance upon each of them in turn, like a mischievous child.

"It is a characteristic thing," said the clergyman in a shaky voice.

"Of course, Mr. Harding," explained Holloway, "I knew beforehand all about the country and all about you. But there were certain things I wanted you to corroborate. Now, how soon can you finish the job?"

Harding thought a minute.

"Naturally, these troubles have set us back," he said. "But if we can start with a full force as soon as the rains are over, I think we can clean up the work by the end of next February."

"Good," commented the banker. "And then we'll need a man to take entire charge of the road. Can you suggest any one? Of course he must have executive experience and know the country."

"There's Gardner of the Central," said Harding. "He's a good executive—perhaps a trifle conservative."

"He won't do at all. Not big enough. We'll consolidate the two roads, you know."

Ned had been in and out of the room during all this discussion, impatiently awaiting word from Fuentes that he could go to Carol. Occasionally Harding had called on him to furnish or confirm some calculation in connection with his statement, but aside from this he had taken no part in the talk. However, the instant the conversation turned on a future president for the railroad Ned cast toward Harding a glance of eager pride and then sat forward in his chair staring expectantly at Mr. Holloway.

"I don't know that I'm really competent to pick the man myself," continued Holloway doubtfully. With one of his sudden changes of manner, he abruptly addressed Ned. "Well, young man, what do you think? Do you know any one who can fill the bill?"

"Ned's eyes were shining. "Oh, of course, you'll appoint Mr. Harding!" he cried.

"Ned!" exclaimed Harding sharply.

"An excellent suggestion; much better than Mr. Harding's," commented Holloway, his face twisted into a smile. "From the first this has been a one-man job. We'll continue it on the same lines—unless Mr. Harding has some vital objection."

Harding stood up slowly and held out his hand.

"I didn't suspect what you were driving at," he said. "Four days in prison must have dulled my wits. Thank you."

"Of course I had to help out my old friend Dr. Simmons," said the banker soberly, looking into Harding's eyes. "And I welcomed the opportunity to put Hemingway where he ought to be. But not the least of my inducements for going into this was the prospect of getting a man like you to work for me."

"Good," said the clergyman.

"And now let us go to the yacht for luncheon and straighten out the financial end," said Holloway briskly. "I want your men to be paid promptly—so you won't have to kill any more of them. That's poor business."

AT THIS point the young lieutenant appeared with orders from Enrique to give Harding and Ned an escort through the town. Harding sent Ned off to Carol, and went to the yacht with Holloway.

Their talk lasted until late in the afternoon. Then they returned to the palace, and Holloway was closeted for half an hour with Enrique.

The new governor seemed greatly sobered and subdued. His manner toward Harding had lost its subtle air of antagonism. When he came out from the conference with Holloway, he held out his hand and frankly congratulated Harding.

"There may be times," he said, "when you will be thinking of the interests of the railroad and I shall be thinking of the interests of the province and my people. But I am confident we can always discuss our differences in good faith."

"I am sure of it," said Harding.

An expression that was very like pain showed for an instant on Enrique's face.

"Good luck to you—over there," he said, and again he held out his hand.

Harding, somewhat puzzled and embarrassed, was glad when Holloway came forward to say good-by.

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"We'll drop in on you on our way back from Lima," declared the banker, "and take a run out on the line."

Harding mounted a horse Ned had sent in for him and started back for headquarters. Dusk had already fallen, and in the shadows the little park looked as trim and neat as usual, so that it was difficult to believe it had been a battleground a few hours past.

The band had been giving its afternoon concert in the ordinary way, and the same chattering crowds were strolling aimlessly to and fro. The Café Gardenia was aglitter with lights. The revolution was over, and Sta. Rita had washed off its blood-stains and patched up its scars and was preparing to celebrate the new order.

Turning away from the glitter and the throng, Harding rode through quiet streets toward the river. The showers had rolled away and the sky was a wonderfully soft blue, ablaze with stars. As he came to the bridge the buildings of the railroad colony loomed up across the stream like great gray shadows. He felt a thrill of home-coming.

A light shone in his office, and he discovered Wainwright, Bill Healy and Cavendish standing together in his room, staring perplexedly at Turner, who faced them with a sneer of triumph on his long face. Turner started as Harding came in, but immediately recovered his self-possession. Harding shot him a quick look and then addressed the three others—

"What's the matter, boys?"

There was a little silence.

"He says—" began Healy, and there he stopped.

"You got a cablegram, which I opened, and it ordered——"

Wainwright's voice died out and he began coughing violently.

"It ordered you to turn over your job to me immediately," said Turner. "I have a confirmatory message from Mr. Hemingway authorizing me to take charge here."

"Give me the cablegram, Wainwright," said Harding quietly.

He read the message slowly.

"Now looka here, John," put in Bill Healy. "Maybe you'll stand for this, and maybe you won't. But you needn't think we're going to stand by quiet and see this little scut sitting at your desk running your railroad. We'll all chuck our jobs in his face first."

"Well Harding?" said Turner inquiringly.

Cavendish leaped forward and thrust his face within an inch of Turner's.

"*Mister* Harding!" he cried with unexpected fierceness.

"He says I must give him the keys to your desk, sir," said Wainwright bitterly.

"Yes, I've been waiting for them long enough," put in Turner.

"Give me the keys," said Harding quietly.

He took them. Turner started to put out his hand, but Harding stuffed them into his own pocket.

"No, Bill," he said, turning to Healy. "I'm not going to stand for it. Not this time."

"What are you going to do about it?" sneered Turner.

"Nothing," said Harding, "until tomorrow afternoon."

"I'm not going to wait for tomorrow afternoon. Your orders are to turn over the job to me immediately."

"Tomorrow afternoon you may come and get your pay envelope from Mr. Cavendish," continued Harding imperturbably. "After that, if you ever show your face here again, I'll—I'll let Bill Healy use his discretion."

"I don't need any of your old discretion, John," broke in Healy, displaying a huge, red fist. "I'll fix him with this."

Turner stepped forward with a flushed face; his voice shook with rage.

"If you think you can bluff me out, you've struck the wrong man. I'll come back tomorrow armed with a court order and with the whole power of the local government behind me."

"Don Antonio will never sign any more crooked orders," said Harding. "He has met with an accident. And Hemingway's game is up."

Turner did not heed him. He had lost control of himself and stood shouting threats and profane comments in Harding's face. Harding had been speaking very quietly. But now his manner suddenly changed.

"Get out, before I throw you out!" he cried, and his big fists clenched and unclenched menacingly.

Turner stopped short. He caught Harding's eye and saw that it was time to leave. The next instant the door slammed behind him.

Harding heaved a long breath.

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"There's going to be a new deal here, boys," he said. "Hemingway's out. Everything will be right now."

XXVIII

"GOOD luck to you—over there." These cryptic words of Enrique's kept running in Harding's head. While he was eating dinner at the station with Wainwright, he kept speculating on the phrase, and also on Enrique's sudden change of manner toward him. What they denoted he had but the vaguest idea, but, without knowing why, he felt as if a weight had been lifted from his spirit.

Harding bolted his meal rapidly and went immediately to his own house, overcome with a desire for a bath, a clean shave and a sleep in clean linen. But after he had bathed and shaved he did not go to bed. Instead he dressed himself carefully in white clothes and walked over to the Curtis bungalow.

Carol and Ned were on the veranda. At the sound of his step, the girl rose and came forward, holding out her hand.

"I'm glad you were able to come," she said. "I've been longing to congratulate you."

"And it's your congratulations I've been wanting."

As he stood for an instant, her hand still in his, he was filled with the sense of her beauty. He felt that a man could brave all dangers and toils and discouragements if he could come home to find such a woman as this waiting at the door. She wore a simple white dress. From the smoothly coiled masses of lustrous brown hair to the tips of her satin slippers, there showed no hint of the days of stress and turmoil she had passed through, except that tonight her face was a trifle pale.

"It *is* like coming home," he said, half to himself, as he released her hand.

"Carol sails for home next week on the *City of Nassau*," put in Ned.

Harding started. The thing was so entirely unexpected.

"Really! For good?" he asked quickly. "You've only been here a few weeks."

Carol did not answer immediately.

"I don't know," she said thoughtfully, at last. "It has been rather strenuous here. Ned thinks I am tired and had best go home for a rest, and I—well, I've seen fighting and men killed, Mr. Harding, and I really want to get back where life is more peaceable and quiet and the people are all—my sort of people.

"And you'll stay?" he repeated.

"I don't know," she answered soberly. "There are some things I want to forget. Perhaps later—" She ended with a sigh.

Then, with a sudden change to vivacity, she cried—

"But, you must tell me all about Mr. Holloway!"

For a time they talked of the great change in the affairs of the road and Harding's good fortune. He called it a piece of luck for which she had been responsible, but Carol would not hear of this.

"It was you who laid the foundation for it," she insisted. "If you weren't who you are and had not done what you have, it could never have happened."

He had no reply, and presently he turned to the boy.

"Ned, I don't like to ask it of you," he said. "But a mail came in today, and tomorrow I shall be very busy. Will you slip down to the office, run over it and pick out whatever letters are urgent so I can attend to them in the morning."

"Of course," answered Ned, getting up.

After he had gone they were silent for a few minutes. Sitting there in the little circle of illumination from the lamp, the night enfolded them like something soft and rich and fragrant. The warm, black sky glittering with a million points of light, the faint, far-away sounds, the cool, sweet aroma of growing things, all fell on their senses and fused into a single feeling, a feeling of complete detachment from all that was rough and hard and unhappy in the world. There existed, for Harding at least, only that little spot of mellow light and themselves who sat in it; beyond lay the night, softly extinguishing all trials and troubles and worries.

Again she spoke glowingly of his triumph.

"You seem to be taking it as a matter of course," she said.

"I wasn't thinking of it," he answered almost harshly. "I——".

He shifted forward in his chair and leaned toward her. His lips trembled, but no words came. He was fumbling nervously with a match-box, and she saw that his strong hands were shaking. Astonished, she looked into his eyes.

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At first she was conscious only of a shock.

"Yes," he was saying as if he had already spoken that which she had seen. "It is so. I do care. More than I can tell you."

"You!" she gasped, putting out her hand as if to fend off his words. "You!"

He sat back slowly, and as she saw the pain come into his eyes she said:

"Oh, but I never knew. I never guessed."

"Can't you understand?" he asked unsteadily. "How could I help loving you?" His hands were gripping the arms of the chair as if he were bracing himself for a blow. "And I do," he said. "So much that nothing else matters."

She saw how her involuntary recoil had hurt him.

"Yes, I believe you," she answered gently. "It is not that I doubt, but—oh, I hardly know how to say it. You see I've never thought of you that way. I've always thought of you—well, much as my brother does—and now—don't you see? I don't know what to say. I don't know what I think even."

"You mean you didn't think me human enough to fall in love?" he asked.

"No, no," she protested. "It's not that. I mean it seems so strange to hear you speaking so—to me."

"It seems the most natural thing in the world," he said, looking at her with a grave, puzzled expression. And then, "Ah, Carol, it would be so wonderful and beautiful!"

In this little flash of eloquence, which was so unlike John Harding, there was something that touched her deeply. Yet she was close to the limit of her capacity for emotion. All through that day she had been tossed from the crest of one wave of feeling to another. Soon, she feared, her nerves would give way and she would be sobbing or laughing ridiculously before this quiet, earnest man who was offering her all he had.

"Don't you care at all?" he asked softly.

Her tears were so near the surface now that she could not trust herself to speak. She shook her head, in doubt rather than denial.

ALL this time the shadow of Enrique had been in Harding's mind. Now for the first time it occurred to him that if Enrique had won her, or even if Enrique had still a chance, she would not be going back, perhaps for good. The meaning of Enrique's cryptic expression of good wishes suddenly became plain to him.

On the instant his manner changed. He leaned forward, his eyes glowing, like an eager, impulsive boy.

"Ah, you must care!" he exclaimed, "And you won't leave, will you? Not until you have promised to come back."

His sudden change broke the tenseness of her feelings. The consciousness of her own power came to her, and she had a fleeting desire to rumple his hair and laugh at him. She did laugh, very gently, and said—

"I will tell you before I go."

"Very soon, please." His voice was pleading and humble, but there was a sparkle of anticipation in his eyes.

"Yes, very soon," she said. "And now, please——"

He answered her request before it was uttered.

"Yes, I'll go now. I know you're tired, but I couldn't wait."

He rose, touched her hand ever so gently, and turned away.

She felt an immense gratitude to him that he should at her mere request forego all persuasion; that he should make no attempt to bring his will and his overmastering personality to the task of forcing her consent, but instead had simply and plainly told her of his love and now was leaving her that she might in all calm search her heart for the answer.

As she stood at the screen-door watching his white-clad figure fade into the night a wave of reaction swept over her. The chaos of conflicting emotion, that Harding's first words had roused in her, subsided suddenly, and a great tranquillity came upon her. It was as if her heart was a vessel that had been buffeted long upon alien seas, and was come into an unexpected but familiar harbor.

Her eyes fastened upon his broad back with its suggestion of the rugged strength that would be for her security. It came over her that in this man there were no secret chambers which might spring open to reveal unanticipated horrors. There was nothing she could not appreciate and understand.

She took a step forward. Twice her lips parted and her breast rose with a little intake of breath.

"No," she whispered happily to herself. "Tomorrow will come very soon."

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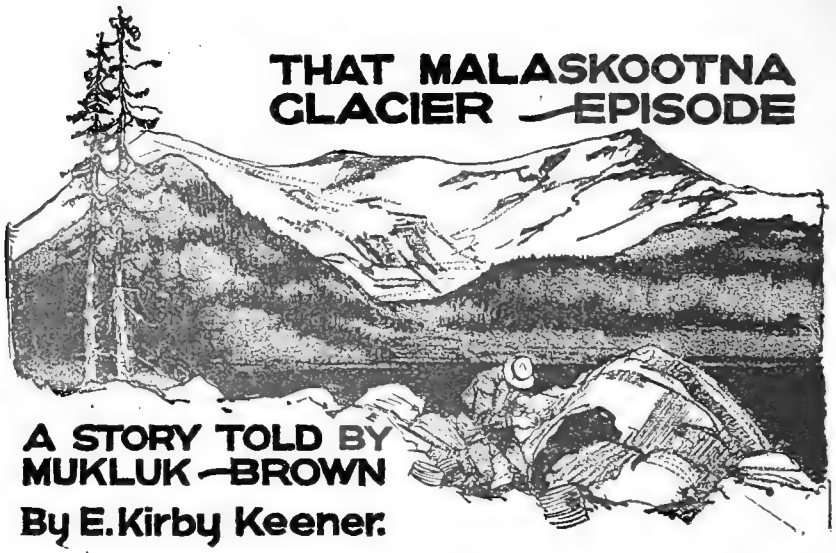

THAT MALASKOOTNA GLACIER EPISODE

A STORY TOLD BY MUKLUK BROWN

By E. Kirby Keener.

Author of "The Chechakos."

YES, I know it seems to be human nature for most folks to talk the most about things they know the least about, and that Malaskootna Glacier episode that everybody's discussin' so vehemently around here is sure the most distorted an' abused topic I've run across since I come back from the "outside."

'Course you fellers ain't s'posed to know the ins an' outs of it, 'cause none o' you was there, and hearsay ain't always to be depended on; but bein' as I was second on the ground and stood to lose, an' did lose number one above, was in on the association claim, got pinched an' put under bond same as the rest of 'em an' so forth, I reckon I'm competent to give it out correct. And now that you've put it up to me, I'm a-goin' to set you right, before you work yourselves up into a state of actual violence over it, seein' as your arguments is a-gettin' purty bitter an' some has even come to blows.

Now, everything's got to start somewheres, so we might as well start where the trouble started.

That whole durned rumpus had its rise in a disagreement betwixt David Rinehauser an' his wife, regardin' his razor an' her rose-bushes.

Everybody's got it here as how they split up 'count o' David's drinkin', but that ain't it.

'Course Dave did drink a little; gambled some, and now an' then stayed out after hours. But Gertie weren't so allfired p'ticular about that; leastwise I never heard her complainin' any, and I hung around their little acre an' a half rancho a purty considerable good bit that Winter we all spent out down in Los Angeleeze.

It happened of a Sunday mornin', when David is prone to snooze a little late, and Gertie is apt to be up early, a-putterin' amongst her pots an' plants.

She has breakfast waitin' on the table for him an' me, as I was there for the week-end, and slips out to fuss a little with her flowers.

Well, when me an' Dave gets up from the table, she's chuckin' a armload o' roses an' g'raniums in some water. Dave, he slants at 'em s'picious-like and makes a bee-line for the bathroom.

"Eh-heh! You been a-trimmin' your rose-bushes with my razor again, ain't you?" he sings out.

"But, David," she sings back, smilin' sweet-like in her voice, "it's so nice an' sharp."

Now, gettin' down to the scientific side o' things, the girl was right, for there's no doubt about a razor bein' a first-class implement for to trim a rose-bush with. But it seems he couldn't never 'preciate its cuttin' qualities to that extent, and the next thing I hear is a horrible uproar in their bedroom.

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"David Rinehauser! My ermine furs!" an' all such stuff as that.

"But, sweetheart," he pleads, as lovin' as can be, "see what a fine shine they're a-puttin' on."

Well, if science is to be considered in the case, I'd say that Dave was right that time, for them ermine furs sure did put some shine on his patent-leather hen-skins. But Gertie goes straight up, and time she gets down to earth again, him an' me is on our way to the baseball game.

Then, time we get back, s'posin' she's all over it like a woman ought to be, she's packed up an' gone back to her mother; just leavin' him a note, sayin' she's quit for good.

NOW Gertie's folks is Jews, and Dave ain't. There's where the shoe pinches. They raised a heap o' sand, an' the roof o' the synagogue most fell in when them two gets married in the first place an' hikes out for the Far North; so, onc't they get her back into the fold again, they pool all their influence for to keep her back.

'Course he done all a feller could to square hisself—even offered to buy her a new muff. But no, sir-ee! She's mad to the bone and won't even come to the telephone. That ol' mother o' hers won't let him plant a foot inside the door, neither; so when Gertie starts suit for divorce on the ground of *cruelty*, he gives up in solemn disgust; for God knows Dave ain't *cruel*. Why, he couldn't even see a yellow dog a-limpin' along the trail without wantin' to pull off his own mitten an' tie its foot up in it.

But that twin brother o' hers was the worst, bein' all swelled up over his junior partnership in the Diamond-Blatts-Harris Company.

Y'see, M. Diamond, the ol' ham-nosed gorilla, always was in love with Gertie, and it's him that takes the kid into the company, tryin' to ingratiate hisself with the mother, an' incidentally layin' the whole family under obligations, so's he'd have a little ground for forcin' his attention on the girl, well knowin' the ol' lady's weakness for flash an' luxury. Then when Miss Gertie steps off with a Gentile, leavin' him with a junior partner on his hands that he didn't have no more use for 'an a rabbit in the first place, he just cuts a Yiddish fling around that button foundry for the next six months with a grouch on worse 'an a tiger with a thorn in its foot, and swears to split 'em up or die a-tryin'.

Now, Blatts, he's ol' Diamond's nephew and is married to Gertie's sister; so there you are. Diamond's got the money, Blatts is got the brains, and the Harrises, they've got the good looks. Some powerful combine, ain't it, onc't you get it organized? That's the point, exactly. They want to keep it all in the family.

All o' Gertie's former friends is a-takin' her up again since she cut loose from Dave. It's box-parties, lawn-fêtes an' all that society jingo every minute, an' she's as full o' bright ideas as a young moth flutterin' around a dozen taller candles.

What's all that got to do with the Malaskootna Glacier episode? Why, it's got a heap, that's what it's got.

Didn't Gertrude Rinehauser know the values in that Kuskositna bonanza her husband discovered an' let us all in on? I reckon she did; and just to show you what a woman's intuition, plus a little impulse, will do for you, she up an' tells it to her brother. He goes ravin' crazy with the gold-fever, stirs up Blatts' gray-matter and puts Gertie up to kiss ol' "ham nose" on the bald spot if he'll finance a expedition o' their own. Good!

Blatts slips in with a mine-expert to verify the "pay," and his telegram back to Diamond sets the wheels a-buzzin'.

Well, sir, if them infernal Jews—nothin' agin the Chosen People in general, y'understand, for I've always heard said as how there is some *white* Jews. But if that bunch didn't ought to be hung, I ain't the original "Mukluk" Brown.

Yes, sir, they organized under the Arizona laws, I believe, as the North Star Development Company and sets right out for to glom the whole durned works, regardless.

HERE they come, on the first boat, with a million-dollar dredger in crates an' cans—one they'd bought already built in Frisco, from some Snake River turnout that had went "fluey" before they went to work. They've got a whole raft o' hoodlums with 'em and a special deputy they picked up at Juneau for the occasion. They've got a high-priced lawyer, too, that knows every loop-hole in the statutes big enough for a flea's parasite to crawl through, and a surveyor that can make a map look like your claim is on the

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other side o' Hell's Half Acre an' his is where your'n ought to be.

First dive out o' the box, the hoboes clouds our titles, the North Star buys the clouds in the bulk and starts to settin' up their dredger. Mr. Surveyor makes a new plat accordin' to his own ideas, runnin' a string o' Gulch claims from here to yonder, kickin' over our monuments, pullin' up our stakes an' runnin' his lines through us just as if we never had filed on the blamed ground at all. Laws-ee! They don't even recognize discovery nor show us on their map. It's a clean case of "strong-arm" claim-jumpin' without apology for haste.

'Course we shows our teeth like a dog in a fence-corner, but Mr. Deputy, he arms the hoodlums an' swears 'em in as sub-deputies, and the first thing we knows, we're all pinched on John Doe warrants for incitin' a riot an' yanked right down to Juneau, where we're placed under bonds for to keep the peace.

We'd been keepin' the Kuskositna purty quiet, y'know, so's there wouldn't be no stampede there till we could get things a-goin' good, so the "natives" down in Juneau wasn't wise to their game. Consequently their proceedin's took on some semblance of bein' legitimate at the start, while the "bench" frowned down on us as if we was a purty desperate lot.

They was a *respectable* corporation, with money invested in the country, so they said, and we was nothin' but "arctic tramps." That's what they called us, right out in open court.

We looked it, too, with our mush-packs frazzled out, dirty corduroys an' faded mackinaws. But the handcuffs, man, the handcuffs! They was the worst of it. They make a feller feel guilty, an' look a heap sight worse, whether he is or ain't.

'Course, the Land Office keeps its finger out o' the pie, as it most always does, and the register tells us we'll have to settle our dispute in court. That means time for the North Star and delay for us, but we starts a adverse suit to oust 'em. They shows fake title, puts up bonds to cover damages and keeps on with their preparations in record-breakin' order.

Oh, they had it all mapped out before they landed. They was fixed for trouble, an' we wasn't even a-dreamin' of it. Their corporation lawyer knowed every turn the case would take, but what did we know? Nothin'! Besides, they had ten witnesses to our one, and, Lord! How them bums could lie! Know their parts? I guess they did. They could sing 'em backwards even; yet I don't reckon none of 'em had ever saw the Kuskositna before. It ain't on the big maps, nohow, neither is the Malaskootna; that's what makes it hard, 'cause they calls 'em both by other names, which keeps the court a-guessin'.

DAVE is off somewheres a-poutin' over the way his wife has done him, so our telegrams all miscarry. Then, when he does come in an' finds us settin' around with our teeth in our mouth, most scared to death, a-waitin' for the "law to take its course," as my pardner, "Penny" Penrod, puts it, he says: "Law? ——! Don't you durned ol' sous-dumplin's know there ain't no *law* here? That word used to stand for somethin' over in the Yukon country, but on this side, it just means protection for corporations that's got money enough to carry on litigation while they're a-diggin' out your gold to fight you with."

Now Dave hisself is square as a die, and stands mostly for peace; but he's a born crank on justice. So when this little Hebrew deal is slipped over of such a sudden, he loads up that ol' four hundred an' five o' his, and says to us: "Come on!"

"No, Dave," puts in Penny, "that won't do. This country is a-gettin' too civilized for gun play. We've got to take our medicine and fight this battle with our brains, 'cause if you kill anybody, it's *murder*. Then you lose your property, anyway, an' your liberty to boot, if not your neck besides."

Dave looks sort o' puzzled at that, an' scratches his head for a whole minute.

"Brains—brains—brains?" he repeats slow an' pensive like, like he's never heard of 'em before.

"Mebby you're right, Penny," he says, "seein' as you fellers ain't with me any more. I reckon it would be a purty big job for me to tackle single-handed." And pokin' off with his head a-hangin' down on his wish-bone, where nobody ever seen David Rinehauser's head before, he adds, "Wish't I'd ha' worked the whole proposition out alone, 'stead of lettin' a bunch o' Willieboys like you in on it."

Nobody takes offense, 'cause we knowed how he must be feelin'. Why, everybody

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knows that the Kuskositna weren't considered worth sneezin' at till Dave makes that strike up near the glacier.

Here's how it was. When him an' Gertie gets married, he brings her up on their honeymoon, to show her over his ol' stompin'-ground; a little bird whispers somethin' in his ear and he leaves her with some friends o' hers at Kodiak, an' hikes off on a hunch that he's a-going to strike it rich. He makes straight for the Kuskositna, where nobody's prodded around much, but don't turn a color till he gets up through Enumclaw narrows, where a small arm o' the Malaskootna glacier onc't cut its way through that first low range.

The main glacier, havin' got clogged up, is dead now, and the Kuskositna arm is all thawed away from tide-water to a couple o' miles above the narrows. Right there the little valley comes slam up agin the ice wall of the glacier, a thousand feet straight up.

Well, it's up near there that Dave hits pay in big flat chunks, from a pin-head up to an ounce, an' the little ones ain't no scarcer'n the big ones. Great, big, wholesouled moose! He couldn't keep a good thing all to hisself to save him from the poorhouse. If he did, he'd bust.

He stakes a full claim in his own name, the same for his wife, as number one below, and six hundred an' sixty each for me an' Penrod, as number one an' two above; the same for a couple of other friends o' his, joinin' ours, and, by all the saints, I never could guess why, he pegs out six hundred an' sixty feet, as number two below, for Alex Kahn, that little pulmonarious barber at Umiak.

I don't s'pose he ever cut Dave's hair more 'an onc't or twic't, but mebby Dave thought the feller ought to be down in Coachella Valley, California, chaperonin' a bunch o' date-trees of his own, 'stead of up here in this hyperborean limbo, tryin' to polish chins for a livin'. Anyway, he done it. But that ain't all. He runs a big association claim from there down to the narrows, an' names the whole bunch of us in the association.

'Course the narrows weren't nothin', 'cause they're solid rock, and when the glacier was a-runnin', it wore the bottom smooth as glass, so no gold could stop there. Then when that big "quake" come, time them last Aleutian islands was throwed up, the strata, which stands most up on end, just pointin' a little bit up-stream, got seesawed somethin' fierce. Some o' the layers got shoved way up, while others was left way down. That's what makes them horrible big riffles in the water all the way through the cut.

So that about corrals pay-dirt on the Kuskositna, for you wouldn't dast think o' workin' under that glacier on account of Boreas Lake, which sets right up on top, a thousand feet above your head, five miles acros't an' the Lord only knows how deep, with the south brim threat'nin' to bust through that wall at any minute.

Well, seein' he's up agin it proper, Dave seems to lose all heart in the whole concern and pikes off by hisself somewheres, leavin' me an' Penny to carry the banner, or "hold the bag," as some folks say. We don't hear from him for a long, long time; then it becomes current that he's staked a new claim the full length of Enumclaw narrows, right on them consarned jagged rocks, and everybody takes it that he's went "loco." You couldn't blame 'em either, for it did seem enough to drive a ordinary human bein' daffy, all this high-handed doin's, an' his wife at the bottom of it, too.

But poor ol' Dave always did harbor more o' them blame chechako ideas in that fairly well-shaped head of his than all the rest o' the sourdoughs I ever knowed put together; an' I wouldn't ha' been so awful took back at anything else he might ha' done, s'help me, I never would ha' laid such a ball-faced piece o' folly at his door as that, for them rocks is bare as bones, 'cept for twenty feet o' water that comes a-hoopin' through there like the mill-tails o' pardition. Why, ol' Nick hisself couldn't ha' done nothin' with 'em if they'd ha' been lined with gold—which they wasn't. Shucks, the Jews even laughed at him, an' didn't so much as get out a injunction to block his move.

So it goes on through the Summer and most o' the Winter; litigation, litigation, litigation—nothin' but it. The North Star keeps a-headin' us off at every turn with demurrers, excuses for delays an' all that legal rot that makes you feel like the court is plenty willin' to be imposed upon.

It was a clean case of hold-up from start to finish. They was just keepin' us up in the air so's they could get the gold out first and do the real lawin' afterward. So they're

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ready to launch the dredger and are waitin' for the river to break up.

ONE day ol' "Sad Eye," as the boys has got to callin' Dave by this time, he come back, his head a-saggin' lower even than when he went away. He's glum, won't talk to nobody much; just nods: "Howdy, Bill," or "Howdy, Tom." Everybody could see his heart was broke.

The Jews, they've been a-spendin' money right an' left, makin' good fellers o' themselves, and has got most everybody won over to their side, 'cept our own interested pardners and the Siwash contingent. You know how it goes, when money's flowin' to the cloop of corks an' good cigars is free.

Now, then, it's down in "Scrawny" Griffin's place. Dave is settin' over agin the wall on a empty siphon case, tendin' strictly to his own affairs. In comes the Jews, Blatts an' Gertie's brother. Sure, all hands line up along the mahogany without waitin' to be asked, 'cause it's a standin' invite, see?—all but me an' Penny and one other. I reckon you can guess who the other'n was, all right.

Well, it's one round after another an' then some. The four walls begin a-cuttin' circles round the merrymakers and they're all a-doin' their best to hold the counter up. They've had enough to make 'em fond of one another, and some is bunched together in a operatic spell. It's then young Harris sets his lamps on Dave. Over he goes an' slaps him on the back.

"Come on, Dave, have a drink on the North Star," he says, in a sort o' mockin' way.

Dave gets to his feet an' looks the kid over disgusted-like, but don't show no signs, one way or other; just pokes off towards the door.

"You might as well take a drink, ol' man, for that's all you'll ever get out of the Kuskositna," the kid goes on, swellin' up most durned important. He was tall, blue-eyed, with black, curly hair, rosy cheeks an' white teeth, just like Gertie. Gee! but he was a purty boy.

Next he waxes insolent, an' alludes to Dave's claim along the narrows as if Dave was a-learnin' to bow down before the inevitable an' seekin' to ketch some crums from the master's table by means of siftin' out the tailin's.

"There ain't a-goin' to be no tailin's!" shouts Blatts in that guttural growl o' his, from over near the bar.

That sets the crowd a-roarin', and every time Dave shows up after that, some of 'em howls out, "How 'bout them tailin's, Dave?"

Now, who ever heard of anybody slingin' a slur in David Rinehauser's face before without measurin' their length on the ground for their impudence? Nobody! But Dave's nerve is gone. He won't even show his teeth. I could see his head a-saggin' lower day by day; his shoulders droopin' more an' more. I just wanted to kick him; so did Penny, too, but we knowed we das'n't 'cause it won't do to drive a man beyond hisself when he's about to bust already.

SPRING'S come, the ice is gone and the river's a-flowin' strong. Ol' Diamond, he's come in and him an' Blatts is up on the dredger, coachin' their highbinders an' claim-jumpers, 'cause they're a-goin' to start up tomorrow. All right——

Me an' Penny is down at Griffin's, playin' seven-up; there ain't nobody else about but Scrawny, and he's half asleep behind the bar. In comes Dave, not sayin' a word; just slouches over to our table, draws up a chair and rests his elbows on the "green." Purty soon he slants back at Grif to see that he ain't a-lis'nin', an' then he speaks in a unassumin' tone:

"Penrod, you an' Mukluk picked me up on the Valdez trail most froze to death one time. Yes, you-all saved my life, and now I'm a-goin' to save your'n. But,——you, don't bite me in the back for doin' it, that's all. You two make for high ground as fast as your legs will take you, and when you reach it, forget that I tol' you, see?"

At that very instant the floor shakes a little from side to side and there's a thick, low rumblin' from somewheres up the gulch. Then the ol' shed rocks somethin' fierce, and the roar of a cannon bellers through the shatterin' panes.

B'-loo-m!

A third one follows, and it seems the earth's been blowed asunder an' we're bein' hurled to Kingdom Come on a half of it. Down comes the mirror! In comes the roof! And we just gets out in time. Dave is a-makin' for the ridge, fit to shame a cinnamon bear; me an' Penny is a-pressin' him hard and Grif is yelpin' at our heels

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worse 'an a puppy with his first bunch o' fire-crackers in tow.

Here she comes! Here she comes! A wall o' water a hundred feet high, lickin' the valley clean, drivin' a million tons o' ice before it in chunks as big as houses; munchin', crunchin', roarin', plungin', worse 'an —oh, I can't say what! Words ain't adequate. Then she hits the dredger. God! we see the splinters goin' by.

Was anybody hurt? Well! if drownin' is any ways like as pleasant as it's recommended to be, why, I'd say they weren't *hurt* much. But that's where the rub comes, see? Whoever done it had to do it just that way; that's all there is about it.

If you send a horse-thief word that you're a-goin' to set up in the manger an' wait for him, he's apt to sprinkle a few sand-spurs in there for you to set on while you're a-waitin', ain't he? That's it. No matter how well you'd like to do, even by your enemies, conditions sometimes won't permit. Now you can't bluff a man, much less a corporation, when there's sixteen million dollars in plain sight. No, they was in the bluffin' business theirselves; an' what's more, they was a-backin' up their bluff with armed guards, and what some folks is pleased to call the "law."

Why, sure, if he'd ha' notified 'em that he was a-goin' to blow up that glacier wall and let that lake down on 'em, they'd ha' had him pinched, removed the high explosives and gone on about their business, while he was a-wearin' the rest o' his life away in a penitentiary. So there you are. And it's always been my contention that if folks will abuse the spirit o' the law, and use it as a "strong-arm" for to step in and relieve some poor cuss of somethin' he's worked hard for, and suffered all sorts o' hardships to get, they'd ought to keep their eye peeled for the consequences.

Well, in a hour it was over. There weren't a pint o' water left in Boreas Lake, and bedrock in the Kuskositna laid clean as a ol' maid's salver, from Malaskootna to the narrows. Them riffles standin' up on end had stopped a lot o' cobblestones, the gold had sifted down through the cobbles and lodged in the crevices so's the fury o' the current couldn't sweep it on, while the boulders hurtled over. All Dave had to do was hire men enough to sack the lucre up.

Now, who'd ha' thought he had any such a idea in his head as that, when he staked a placer-claim on them infernal rocks? Nobody! It was just one o' them chechako notions o' his, so it looked to me like at the time. But my hind-sight is purty accurate, an' I can see through the whole scheme now.

D'you s'pose he let us in on that? Not so's you could notice it.

OH, THAT ain't all. Dave's trial was where the "Law" slipped up. Yes, they took him into custody an' yanked him down to Juneau the very first thing, 'cause he's the only one of our bunch that's been missin' and whose conduct couldn't be accounted for. Moreover, it's held agin him as suspicious, his refusin' to show up to testify in our suit to oust the North Star, and that he alone profits by the destruction of their plant an' the guttin' o' their alleged properties.

Bonds? No bonds. There weren't gold enough betwixt the North Pole an' Panama to coax 'em to turn him loose, or let any of us even look at him through the bars.

They're a-doin' their durndest to make a short story of it, and it looks like they're a-goin' to send him over on circumstantial evidence, only they're a wee bit long on circumstance and too blamed shy on evidence.

Gertie comes up for the trial to testify in Dave's behalf, realizin' how bad a girl she's been an' what a awful tragedy's took place, 'count o' her gettin' so fussed up over them pleggon ermine furs—leastwise that's the way she puts it. 'Course there's been a heap o' unkind theories advanced regardin' her sudden change o' heart, since her bread's been buttered on the other side by ol' Diamond an' the rest of 'em bein' put out o' business and David becomin' rich as all get out.

Never mind her personal reasons; they don't count nohow. Neither did her testimony. It only made things worse, 'cause it ain't the lawsuit this time; it's manslaughter Dave's up for, and all that she can say only tends to show that he had a reason for blowin' up the glacier.

Circumstances is all agin him, but it's evidence they lack. They prove it's dynamite, all right, but where did it come from? Who put it there, and when, and by what means was it transported—since it must ha' took such a awful lot to do the job? Nobody's got a clew.

Dave hisself won't take the stand, nor

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say where he was or wasn't at any time at all. 'Course, they might *claim* that he wasn't at this place, nor that place; and they might prove that he *was not* in heaven, for that matter, but that ain't provin' that he *was* in the other place, is it? Not by a long jump!

Now if they could ha' just got them Indian packmen started to talk, they might ha' learned somethin' tangible. But, shucks, y'couldn't get a Indian to open his head agin Dave Rinehauser to save your life—or the Indian's either; for they love him out o' the bottom o' their hearts. He don't treat 'em like Indians, y'know. He treats 'em all just as if they had souls, same as other folks has got. So when it come to cross-questionin' the Siwash lads—well, I've seen some purty thick-skulled bipeds on the witness-stand, but never a one that knowed less 'an them scamps did. No, not a one of 'em had ever saw Dave in their life before. Y'couldn't help but laugh. But testimony is testimony, an' that's all the court can go by.

The prosecution holds out for circumstances, though, and the court agrees to bind Dave over till they get more evidence. They'd ha' done it, too, only for that pesky little one-lunged Jew.

NOW I've always had my doubts about them *white* ones, and I've got 'em yet; but there was one. Poor consumpted devil, white to the pit of his soul and true-blue to the marrow.

He comes all the way from Umiak an' puts up at a lodgin'-house where a good many comes an' goes. All the time the trial is on, he keeps secret tab on every word of testimony through a couple of Yids he knows. One of 'em is in the court-room every minute, while the other is makin' a report to him as he's a-layin' there in bed.

"The dynamite, vare did it come from?" he asks Penny, when he went down to see him along towards the last. "Dot iss all I vandt to know."

"That's where the deadlock is," says Penny. "Nobody seems to know, and they're a-goin' to lock Dave up again till they find out, see?"

"Dot vill do," says Kahn. "Take me to the court-house, blease."

We wraps him up in a great big bundle an' hauls him there on a sled by hand. Up the steps we tote him, sled an' all, and drags him down the aisle. The "court" peers over his specks in wonder; there ain't a murmur in the house.

"Vot iss it dot you vandt to know?" says Kahn. "I'm the only man vot knows."

Then when he's propped up an's took the oath, he spins 'em out the greatest yarn y'ever heard. All about the explosions, one—two—three. How he planted the charges in a row acrost the glacier wall; the first shot next the lake, the second in the middle, and the last and heaviest one way down in a crevice next the outer edge. Tells 'em how he stole a ton o' dynamite from the English company down at Kenai slough the Winter before an' then blowed up their magazine to cover up his tracks. He's got his dates correct, to boot, an' it all gibes in with the English company's explosion mystery just like a Chinee puzzle, onc't you get one set up right. Tells the court he done it for revenge, 'cause the North Star folks had robbed him of his only chance of makin' a stake, so's he could go outside somewheres an' gather back his health.

Then he begins to cry and says his conscience hurt him so after seein' how terrible a thing he'd done, and the thoughts of a *innocent* man bein' about to answer for his crime had just plum' broke him down.

Dave sets there with his mouth a-gappin' open, more s'prised 'an anybody else. The court stenographer is close up 'side the sled, a-takin' down every word.

Now, if there's any such a thing as a *white lie*, that was one—and a *white Jew* tol' it, too! The whitest of the white!

"Dot's my dyin' statement, gentlemen," gasps Kahn, a-fallin' back limp-like an' 'most all in. He can't no more 'an whisper now.

"I'll have the law on you," shouts the marshal. "I'll chuck you right in jail."

"Go get your warrant," whispers Alex. "I guess I'll be ready for service, time you get it all writ up." And with that he just keels over and coughs his candle out.

UNDER the spell the poor little feller's story has cast over all that's there, an' midst the tears a-gleamin' in everybody's eyes, the judge steps up behind the bench an' brings the court to order. He steadies back, a-tryin' to make it 'pear as if he ain't a bit affected, but his voice is purty husky as he turns to Dave an' says—

"Mr. Rinehauser, you're acquitted."

Everybody's shakin' hands with Dave

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and tryin' to square 'emselves by sayin' they knowed he never done it, an' all that tommyrot, an' he just takes it in one ear an' lets it out the other'n, smilin' friendly, as if he b'lieved it all, till Gertie comes rushin' up a-holdin' out her hands:

"Oh, David, I'm so glad!" That's all the girl could say; but he takes her by both arms an' looks her through an' through, as if he's tryin' to figger out how much of it she means.

'Course we all turns our heads around the other way, but I just had to peep. She turns them big blue eyes o' hers up through a flood of tears, and then I heard her whisper—

"David, if you love me, I'll come back."

"Would you, Gertie, if you knowed I done it?" he asks her, close down by her ear.

"But I don't know it, Dave," she says an' drops her head over on his breast.

They're back in California now, with a big hundred horse-power runabout, tryin' to keep down their income-tax.

THE ABDUCTION OF SWAIN

By M.S. Wightman

Author of "Unofficial," "An Occasional Hero."

SWAIN COUNTY is democratic, with the democracy which holds that a coat, except at church on Sundays or as a protection against the chill of Winter, is a symbol of effete snobbishness. Swainites rejoice that there are no cities in the county; theirs are the virile qualities which spring from a constant and intimate contact with the soil, and theirs the equality which exists in communities where nobody but a skinflint like Pete Stivens can make much more than a living, and everybody can in one way or another make that.

There is no affectation about men from Swain; they wear their shoes unpolished and their suspenders showing; their trousers bulge outward at the knees and sink inward at the shins; and you can as easily change their opinions and their prejudices as you can the contour of a rock by hammering on it with your fist.

Swain County is democratic. It is also Democratic, with that unquestioning Democracy which enables managers of national campaigns to say, "Virginia: Oh, chalk her up! Now what are we going to do to capture Indiana?" The climax to a congressional campaign comes in June, or whenever else the Democrats hold their convention. The casting of the ballot for the Democratic nominee is a mere November formality about as exciting as milking the cows.

But if the November elections lack the heady tang of contest which is found in those States where parties battle on somewhat even terms, the June conventions are tart enough at times to prickle the appetite of the most jaded sufferer from a satiety of excitement.

And when Ebenezer Moss, everywhere except in the record of his baptism called "Ebe," and his five sun-baked associates, who composed the delegation from Swain County, found themselves unexpectedly occupying that dizzy eminence known as

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"the balance of power," their glow of pride in their position was tempered by its peculiar conspicuousness. When visiting cities, farmers ordinarily do not strive to attract attention to themselves; rather they suffer from an embarrassing consciousness that they are attracting too much of it unsought.

Ebe perspired profusely as, on the thirteenth ballot, he cast Swain's vote for Griggs. His voice was low and grated huskily; but the eyes of the delegation were fixed in a look of dogged determination.

The chairman of the convention announced the result of the vote: Beckwith thirty-five, Danby thirty-one, Griggs six. It did not differ from any which had followed the seventh ballot.

"No one has yet been nominated," said the chairman. "As I have already stated the rules require the vote of a majority of the delegates answering to their names to effect a nomination."

Step Lessner, Colonel Danby's genial manager, chuckled as the vote was announced.

"We've surely got 'em!" he whispered to his neighbor. "The Judge's crowd is going to break on the next ballot, and when the break comes watch the stampede to line up behind the winner. That bunch of rubes is doing us almost as much good by voting for Griggs as they would voting for us."

Lloyd Parsons, who managed Judge Beckwith's campaign, was of the same opinion. For four hours he had wrestled with the deadlock, trying to understand the motive which led the delegates from Swain to support with adamantine determination a man who had as much chance of winning the nomination as a cab horse the *Grand Prix*. At last he gave it up in despair.

"It's nothing but pig-headed cussedness!" he exclaimed in a moment of exasperation, for he had sensed among his forces an almost imperceptible waning of enthusiasm which warned him that they were approaching the end of their staying powers.

After that thirteenth vote, he hurried to Judge Beckwith in his room at The Planters.

"They will break if we let it come to another vote!" he exclaimed excitedly. "I have had the devil's own time holding them in line so far. And that crowd from Swain —what they are up to I can't guess. I'm stuck. It's up to you, Judge. What do you want me to do?"

Judge Beckwith paced up and down the room, rolling between his lips the stub of a burned-out cigar. His shaggy gray eyebrows were drawn together forming a deep furrow at the base of his large, slightly arched nose. Danby had made the fight personal, showing small reverence for the tradition that the Judge could not be defeated. "That useless old mummy," "a bag of clothes who's been ten years in Congress without getting a cent for his district," and similar belittling references to a suggestion of old-fashioned courtliness in the Judge's manner, flashed through his mind as he listened to Parsons.

Now and then the hands on the arms of his chair trembled. He did not greatly value his seat in Congress; he had even been considering his withdrawal when Danby announced his candidacy; but now he burned with all the fire of his Southern blood to defeat that upstart, that cad, that blackleg who held in light scorn those traditions which were the very marrow of the Judge's bones. His anger did not blind him to the desperateness of his situation, however; Danby had captured the younger element—they were the fighters.

"Have Henderson move an adjournment," he said finally. "Danby's crowd will oppose it, but the Swain delegates will be with us on that. I judge they have had enough of the limelight for awhile. Then see our men and meet me in my room here after dinner. We will see what can be done."

Parsons started for the door.

"If that crowd hadn't stuck by Griggs, we'd have had that nomination salted away now and could turn in for a night's sleep. Lord knows I need it."

"If they hadn't stuck by Griggs, Danby would have been nominated," answered the Judge gloomily. "If they had gone, it would not have been for me. Don't fool yourself about that, Lloyd. I've talked with that fellow Moss; he thinks I have neglected Swain." And as Parsons opened the door, he added, "See our crowd before you meet me; be sure they are solid for tomorrow morning."

The Judge proved to be right about the adjournment. In vain Step fought it, calling for another ballot. When it dawned on the Swain delegation that a vote for an adjournment meant a respite from the pillory of hostile glances, they lined up solidly with the Beckwith forces, and the convention

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stood adjourned until nine o'clock the following morning.

Ebe laid down the banner bearing the name of his county. He laid it down hastily, with a sigh of relief, as the man in the first straw hat finally hangs it on the rack at night.

"Come on," he said to his companions, "let's go over to that hotel. I'm near starved to death."

HERE, an hour later, Step Lessner, peering through the rusty screen doors, spied the delegation seated at a table well to the rear of the crowded dining-room. The Swainites wasted no time in idle conversation; the rattle of the tableware musketry was interrupted only by the occasional hiss of bursting shrapnel as Zap Powers cooled the coffee in his saucer.

Step passed the table apparently without seeing its occupants, but a little way beyond it he turned and swept the room with his glance. He looked disappointed; he shook his head. And then he saw Moss. His start of surprise deceived even Ebe's suspicious eyes, and his frown gave way to a cordial smile as he came over to the table.

"Well, well," he said genially, "replenishing your forces after the heat of conflict, I see. I guess you need it. Some day you fellows have had."

"We have supper at six out our way," drawled Moss. "You get hungry as a mule waiting till eight."

"You bet you do. I'm famished myself. I was just looking for Colonel Danby; I suppose he must have finished. If you don't mind, I'll join you. I hate eating alone."

He beckoned to a darky waiter, who quickly switched a chair from a neighboring table, and without waiting for permission drew up at the Swain board. His addition was received in silence.

But Step's good humor was as irrepressible as his flow of language.

"Pretty crowded, eh, this hotel? And the town, too? And hot! I'll bet I have sweated ten pounds out of my hide today. Got comfortable rooms here?"

"We've only got one," said Moss indifferently. "It ain't nothin' extra, but it does to sleep in."

Step laughed.

"Say, the way you fellows stick together does my heart good; and the way you stick by your man—well everybody is talking about it. You have certainly let them know there is a county named Swain in this State."

"Yes, they seemed to be talkin' about it right smart today." Ebe's tone was dry. "I couldn't hear all they said, but what I did didn't seem exactly perlite. I thought they 'peared to be right much put out."

"Oh, that was nothing at all. You surprised them by the way you held on; they were trying to bulldoze you. The city fellows did most of the talking. In the city, you know, you get the habit of shouting for your man out front and then going around behind and making a deal. City people can't understand sticking to a friend when he seems to be licked. Take Parsons, for example. Nice fellow, but lived all his life in a city. You got his goat all right. He couldn't understand why you wouldn't make a trade. He said it was nothing but pig-headed cussedness."

Ebe glowered, and the rattle of the firing line momentarily ceased.

"I didn't hear him say that." His tone was suspicious.

"No you couldn't, you were on the floor holding out for your man, and he was outside and had closed the door. Now I got you all right, because I lived in the country once myself. It takes courage and backbone to do a thing like that, and when I am looking for grit I don't go to the cities. As Colonel Danby says, 'Show me a nation's farms, and I will judge that nation's prosperity; show me a nation's farmers, and I'll tell you that nation's character.' Fine way of putting it, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Ebe, gulping down a swallow of coffee, "and Judge Beckwith talks fine, too. He sends me speeches printed in what they call *The Record* that would make the hair on a yellow dog's back stand up. He don't send nothin' else to Swain though."

Step laid down his knife and fork and threw his head back.

"That's good!" he chuckled. "And we're going to change that habit. I don't believe in talking much myself. My business is selling improved milk pails; and when I want to sell a man I don't give him a lot of hot air about what the pails can do; I just hand him one, and he sees for himself that it will keep out the flies and dirt, save the milk if the cow tries to put her foot in it or kicks it over, and gives him altogether a

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sweeter and purer product. His eyes, not his ears, convince him.

"And it's the same way here. Of course, I'm for the Colonel first. I know his splendid qualities, what a hard worker he is, how much he is going to do for his district if he goes to Washington. But—" here he lowered his voice, and after glancing carefully about him, leaned forward—"if we can't put him over, then I'm for Griggs. Of course, I should like to change you fellows, to get you on our side, but I suppose there is no hope of that?"

Ebe thrust his chin forward determinedly.

"What do you say, boys? Are we going to stand by Griggs?"

The eyes of the delegation were fixed on Step. Their grimness, that set look which indicates a mind whose ideas have crystallized beyond hope of change, sent a thrill dancing through his veins.

"You jest watch us, young fellow," said Zap Powers.

Step pushed back his chair.

"Well I'm mighty glad to have had a little friendly talk with you fellows. I'm sick of politics and I guess you will be before that Beckwith crowd has finished talking to you tonight."

"I don't guess anybody's goin' to do much talkin' to us tonight," said Ebe. "We're goin' to bed. If they want to do any talkin' they'll have to do it in the mornin' down to the hall where the talkin' belongs."

Step rose.

"By the way"—he turned to Ebe—"I'd like to send your wife one of those pails. She'd find it useful, and we haven't placed any down in Swain yet."

"Much obliged," answered Ebe, "but I don't guess she needs it."

"Why not, you surely keep cows?"

"Yes"—Ebe's face was solemn but there was a wrinkle in the corner of his eyes—"I do. But I reckon they know how to take care of the milk where she's gone."

For a moment Step's face was blank; then he joined in Ebe's grin.

"All right, I'll send it to you instead. And I'd like to send one to each of you fellows, but I am afraid people might misunderstand and think I was trying to bribe you."

"You send them along, young fellow." Zap stroked his beard complacently. "Nobody's goin' to misunderstand, because—we ain't goin' to vote fer your man. We're fer Griggs and don't you fergit it."

Five minutes later, Step reported to Colonel Danby.

"We've got 'em," he said jubilantly, "sure as you are a foot high that bunch of fleas will stick to Griggs if they keep us here till Christmas. It's all over but the shouting and that will be by ten in the morning. Beckwith's men will stand by him for one ballot until they see that things are the same as yesterday, and then you watch!"

"You have seen the Swain crowd?" asked the Colonel.

"Seen 'em!" Step's smile was a crescent moon. "Well have I? When you want some one to talk to a bunch of rubes just send for your Uncle Step. He rolls them around his tongue. I put them to bed, salted away in ice, with the door locked and the key lost until tomorrow. I'll look around among our fellows a bit and then I'll turn in. I don't suppose the Judge and Parsons will be up to anything?"

Danby waved his hand loftily.

"Beckwith is an old wind bag and Parson's knows he's licked. If you are sure you have that Swain crowd fixed, we can forget about them," he smiled vindictively. "I want to shove his ugly old nose in the mud so deep that he will never dare show it again. The condescending old stiff! Judge Beckwith of Virginia, sir!"

Parsons, at a table where, hidden by a pillar, he could watch the Swain Delegation, had seen Lessner enter and insinuate himself into the party. He had not missed the gradual thawing of their manner, nor Step's look of satisfaction as he left the room. He knew what Step had been trying to do as well as if he had been present at the interview—merely clinching their determination to stick by Griggs—and he realized the uselessness of trying to change them.

With a feeling of discouragement he followed Lessner from the room and saw him leave the hotel. Then, his face sunk in thought, he entered the elevator.

IN JUDGE BECKWITH'S room he found a young man, Fitzhugh Cary, listening with his chin in his hand to the Judge's explanation of the situation. Fitzhugh's tall, angular frame, prematurely gray hair and solemn face caused a stranger instinctively to look for the clerical vest; but when he spoke the stranger knew why he did not wear it. His solemnity did

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not penetrate beneath the surface and his eyes glinted with a light of deviltry.

"Hello, Lloyd," called Fitzhugh, as Parsons entered, "who's been biting you on the ear?"

Parsons acknowledged the greeting with a wave of the hand.

"I am trying to think of a way to murder that Swain delegation without being hung for homicide. If I could only get rid of them, life would be worth while again," he replied, dropping wearily into a chair.

Fitzhugh rose.

"The Judge can probably tell you how; he used to be a lawyer, they say. I'll drift around a bit."

"Sit down," said the Judge. "Let's hear what Lloyd has to say. There's nothing you shouldn't hear."

Parsons told his tale: of Lessner's dining with Ebe and his associates; of the good humor of the party; of Lessner's look of satisfaction as he left the room.

"He's got them fixed all right," concluded Parsons. "I'll admit I fell down on that crowd. Moss fooled me the first time I talked with him. I took his silence for agreement."

Judge Beckwith rose and, walking to the empty grate, tossed into it his half-smoked cigar. His sallow face, seamed with tiny, dark wrinkles, was as stern as Bismarck's death-mask; occasionally he pressed his lower lip against his teeth, as he tugged at the ends of his gray mustache, heavily streaked with the dull brown stains of nicotine.

"Don't blame yourself, Lloyd," he said. "It is my fault. I have gotten careless, as we all do when things are too easy for us. I ought to have looked after my fences down in Swain. I know those fellows; no use wasting time with them now. You will have somehow to make a breach in Danby's crowd."

"You couldn't shake one of them loose with dynamite," snapped Parsons. "I have tried every known means short of actual bribery. They feel that we are licked. They are on the band wagon."

The Judge's eyes burned, but not with the light of defeat. He brought his clenched fist down on the mantelpiece, and when he spoke there was in his voice that heavy rumble which had so often brought crowds upstanding to their feet in a wild burst of cheering; but back of the rumble there was a ring of utter sincerity not always found in his political orations.

"For twenty years I have served this State honorably and well in the nation's capital. With no fear but that of God, and no favor but the service of my fellow men, I have filled my high office. If these fellows think they are going to set me adrift now, putting in my place a demagogue, a cheap trickster, a man who holds in light scorn those ideals and traditions which have made this State worthily called 'The Old Dominion,' then they have forgotten that the Beckwiths' is fighting blood. They may triumph over my body tomorrow, but not before I have made one stand in that convention which will live forever in the political annals of our State."

"Do you mean, Judge, that you are actually going to address the convention before the candidate has been nominated?" Lloyd's tone was incredulous.

"Yes," answered the Judge, "that is what I do mean. It may be without precedent, but I shall ask it as a favor. I do not believe they will deny me."

Fitzhugh suddenly felt his eyes grow moist. The old order was making its last stand; it was histrionic, it was unreal, it was hopelessly out of step, but somewhere there was a spark of nobility, of grandeur about it. Life would lose something of its romance, something of its poetry when the last of the old order had been thrown on the rubbish heap.

And the Judge must not be allowed to carry out his intention; he was mad to think of it. Fitzhugh could hear the jeers, the calls of Danby's men as they baited the old Congressman. His humiliation would be worse than a hundred defeats.

"Look here, Judge," he said, "you stay right in this room until they come around to hand you the nomination on a silver platter."

The Judge shook his head.

"I can't stay here forever, my boy," he said in an effort at playfulness. "I must go out to meet them; it is the only way."

"No, it isn't," answered Fitzhugh bluntly. "It's the wrong way, and it won't work. I have a scheme that will."

"What is it?" asked the Judge, looking searchingly at Fitzhugh from beneath his shaggy eyebrows.

"Never mind. What you don't know, Judge, you can't be blamed for. Will you promise to stay here?"

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The Judge's eyes seemed to be prying into Fitzhugh's very soul.

"Nothing dishonorable?" he asked presently.

The young man shook his head. The Judge's tension suddenly relaxed.

"All right," he said, "I put myself in your hands; but remember, my boy, they must be kept clean."

"Don't you worry about that." Fitzhugh rose briskly. "Just let Lloyd keep his eyes open to see that Lessner doesn't pry loose any of his men before the first vote tomorrow, and if he bumps into me he wants to forget that he knows me. I am going to flag Lessner in the lobby and have a talk with him where every one can see us; and after that—well, never mind, that's my job. But, Lloyd, for Heaven's sake, cheer up! Nobody wants to feel that he is following the undertaker."

AS MOSS had said, the Swain delegates occupied only one room at The Planters; and when six men had expressed their desire to crowd into one room, Mr. Lemuel Moffat, the voluble clerk, whose own clothes were made by the Regal Tailors of New York, and whose manner varied from deference to polished brass, according to those of the guest to whom he was talking, had not troubled to give them the bridal suite.

The room was hot and the room was dingy. The single light, suspended by a cord from the center of the ceiling, dimly outlined three recumbent forms on one of the beds, two on the other, and Ebe stretched out on the sofa. In spite of the heat, the Swainites had removed only their coats. Zap had voiced their feelings when he said:

"If this here place gits afire, I'm goin' ter be ready ter hop. No, sir, I'll loosen my shoes, but I won't take 'em off."

From the two beds came sounds which indicated that their occupants were sunk in sleep. But not so Ebe.

He lay, his eyes drooping, dreamily gazing at the dusty electric light bulb, but not seeing it. Even the occasional mopping of his forehead did not ruffle the smile which hovered about his lips. For in spirit Ebe was not in the close room at The Planters; he was sitting on a soap-box in Meadows' store at Jackson's Cross-Roads, recounting for the hundredth time the story of the nomination of Griggs—his friend Congressman Griggs in Washington—the man who had given Willie Jennings a job in Puter Rica, and had sent a government engineer down to look into the possibilities of dredging Goose River.

When the door opened and a stranger entered, Ebe hardly saw him. But when the man moved to the center of the room and looking about him exclaimed, "Where in the dickens do they expect me to sleep!" Ebe's spirit returned to The Planters with a rush, and sitting upright on the sofa, he narrowly watched the intruder.

But the man seemed unaware that he was intruding. With a "whew" of outgoing breath, he lazily removed his coat, hung it on the back of a chair and stooped to untie his shoes.

As he straightened up, he caught sight of Ebe.

"Some hot, eh?" he said casually, with a nod of greeting.

"Well, I ain't exactly cold." Ebe's manner was guarded.

The stranger shook off his shoes, and stepping to the beds stood for a moment looking at them. Then he shook his head slowly and returned to the chair.

"If I were a postage-stamp I might do it. What did that fool clerk mean anyway?" he said.

The question obviously was addressed to himself; he seemed to have forgotten the occupant of the sofa.

Ebe cleared his throat.

"What'd the clerk do?" he ventured.

"Said there was a bed up here that had only two men in it, while every other one in the house had three or four. He sold me that third place for two dollars."

With his forearm Ebe wiped his forehead, whose heat suddenly communicated itself to his voice.

"He did, did he? These people seem to be mighty well scared they're goin' to lose some money. And they seem to be afraid, too, somebody's goin' to be comfortable in this here hotel. Maybe I'm wrong, but I thought when we hired this room it was ourn."

The stranger glanced quickly at the beds.

"These aren't friends of yours, are they?" he asked. There was a note of surprise in his tone.

Ebe's eyes, following the direction of the stranger's look, fell on Zap. Awake, Zap

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had his points, but asleep—the subtle flattery of the question did not escape Ebe.

"Well," he said, "we come from the same county. We're the Swain delegation to the convention. I'm chairman."

The stranger leaned forward, admiration suddenly written in large characters on his face.

"Swain County? The crowd that stood off the whole convention today, and that everybody is speculating about for tomorrow?" He rose, genuinely distressed, and picked up his coat. "Excuse me for disturbing you, won't you? The clerk didn't tell me. I'll try to squeeze in some other place. You fellows need all the rest you can get. Everything depends on you tomorrow."

Ebe felt a sudden warmth of friendliness for the stranger.

"Sit down," he said, "you ain't disturbin' us none. We can stand it if you can."

The stranger hesitated for a moment; then he sat down.

"All right, if you are sure I won't interfere I will stretch out on the floor here." He took a blanket from the foot of one of the beds, spread it on the floor, and turning the chair down on it, placed a pillow against its back. "I want to be on hand to see what you fellows are going to do in the morning," he continued, as he stretched out on his pallet.

Ebe started to speak; the stranger raised his hand in a gesture of admonition.

"No, don't say it. I am not trying to worm anything out of you. As you might very properly remark, it is none of my business. Good night."

He turned on his side, and with a deep sigh, lay quiet.

Only the strangling rumble of Zap's snores disturbed the silence of the room.

On his sofa Ebe lay gazing at the stranger's prematurely white head. He was an outsider who had approved of the stand Swain had made in the convention. Pleasant thoughts wandered through Ebe's mind. He would be something of a hero back home—back home.

To his eyes the stranger's head had gradually changed into the face of Sal, the old mare that dragged a plow on week days, a buggy on Sundays; and to his ears Zap's snore reminded him of the hum of the bees among the honeysuckle at the far corner of the garden—a spot to be avoided. He backed away from it now, but the drone of the honey-gatherers followed him. Something seemed to have disturbed those pesky bees. He turned and began to walk toward the house; their drone, as they followed him, rose to an angry buzz. With each step he quickened his pace, until, as he neared the open kitchen door, his retreat had become a headlong rout and the bees were hanging on his very heels. Behind that door lay safety.

He leaped for it, missed his footing—*crash!*

Grinning sheepishly, Ebe picked himself up from the floor, glancing around to see whether his fall had been observed. And then he heard it.

Against the background of Zap's snores came the sound, steady, persistent, rising and falling, now apparently beating against the wall, now gliding across the ceiling. Ebe's mouth gaped open as his bulging eyes tried to locate this disturber of the peace. The breathing from the beds became less stertorous; one of the sleepers sat upright.

"Wha's that?" he exclaimed.

"Gosh a'mighty, Hank, if it ain't a bee!"

Ebe had slid to the floor, and on his hands and knees, pointing toward the door, he continued to crane his head upward as if the sound fascinated him.

Hank shook his neighbor. The delegates from Swain began hastily to show signs of returning consciousness; also a palpable nervousness possessed them.

Only the stranger, stretched out on his pallet with his back to the delegates, failed to show signs of wakefulness.

Zap's wits collected themselves slowly.

"Wha' d'yer mean, troublin' me?" he growled. "Lemme 'lone. It ain't time to git up. I ain't been asleep five minutes."

"You go right on back to sleep," Ebe called over his shoulder. "I don't mind. Maybe the bees won't——"

"Bees! Whar's any bees?"

With a bound, Zap was in the middle of the floor, fully awake.

"Jest listen. I guess you can find out for yourself."

The buzz became louder, more insistent, as if its failure to escape from the room were maddening the insect.

"Lemme out of here!" Zap rushed for the door.

He stumbled over the stranger, and there

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followed such a noise as a large, fat body makes in coming to rest suddenly on the floor.

The stranger rose irately from beneath Zap's legs.

"What's this row about!" he exclaimed.

Ebe, crawling rapidly toward the door, approached him.

"There's bees here! You kin have the room if you want it. We're leavin'," he panted.

"Pooh, who's afraid of a bee?" The stranger's tone was unruffled.

"Them as lives with 'em! Gosh a'-mighty, git him out!"

There was agony in Ebe's voice; in that instant he had sprung to his feet, and simultaneously the stranger had grabbed Ebe's trousers just where the slack was greatest above the knee.

"I've got him, I think," he said calmly.

"Hold him then—for goodness sake don't turn him loose. He kin have 'em and welcome if I can only git out."

Ebe's fingers were tearing at the fastenings of his suspenders. The other members of the delegation retreated to the beds, and with unsympathetic delight watched their chairman hurriedly divest himself of his nether garment.

The stranger shook the trousers out of the window, while Ebe, standing on the scene of conflict, mopped his face.

"He didn't git me, but he came gosh a'-mighty close!" There was relief, there was thankfulness and there was something akin to pride in the chairman's voice.

"Think that's all?" asked Zap nervously.

"Sure, it isn't good form for city bees to hunt in couples," said the stranger reassuringly.

At that moment, as if in judgment against the stranger's levity, a hissing buzz burst from the mattress on which the delegation was seated.

OBJURGATIONS and oaths, the clatter of quickly moving feet, the crash of the chair against the washstand—and Swain County came to order in the corridor. At its forefront stood the stranger.

"For Heaven's sake, somebody shut that door!" he called hoarsely.

Zap did so with alacrity.

"And now," he continued, "the question is how are we going to get rid of them?"

"No, sir," said Ebe firmly, "there ain't no question how I'm goin' to get rid of 'em. I ain't. They kin have that room and welcome, fer all of me—I'm done with it. That young fellow downstairs's got to give us another."

A few minutes later Mr. Lemuel Moffat's eyes, glancing up from the knife with which he was manicuring his nails, found themselves resting on the excited faces of the Swain delegation.

"What can I do for you, gentlemen?" he asked, as he leisurely stepped to the desk and rested his palms one on either side of the register.

"We want another room," said Ebe. "There's bees in that one you gave us."

"Bees?" Mr. Moffat's tone was incredulous. "Bees your Aunt Susy! The only bees in this town are at Sol Levy's Beehive—around the corner, four doors down on Main Street—full line of dry goods and notions—also neckties—things you wear around your collar, you know. It opens at seven o'clock."

He pointed significantly to the thing of purple and gold which circumscribed his own standing collar.

"Look here, young fellow, don't you try to get funny," answered Ebe, his red face going an even darker shade. "The Lord didn't aim you to be no end-man. I tell you there's bees in that room—bees, things what have got more poison in their tails than some people's got sense in their heads."

"Yes?" Mr. Moffat's manner was superbly apologetic. "I forgot. Pardon me. Of course there are. Got them in your bonnets, haven't you, for a fine old way-back sort named Griggs? But don't blame me for your bee. You oughtn't to mind him anyway; he's a dead one, and dead bees don't bite."

For a moment Mr. Moffat's cool effrontery silenced Ebe. Then he returned doggedly to the charge.

"There's bees in that room, I tell you, and you've got our money. You've got to give us another; and you stop bein' so fresh, young fellow, or you're goin' to git something that'll swell your nose worse'n a bee's tail."

"What do you think this is, Mr. Swain County?" answered Lem with some heat. "A sectional book-case? Do you think I can make rooms by simply piling them on?"

"I don't care where you git it, we've got to have another place to sleep."

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"Listen, friend, that's the billiard-room over there. Four men are sleeping on each table now; every bath-tub has got a thankful occupant; two men are in the coal-cellar and one in the engine-room. I'd send you down to the kitchen to sleep on the stove, but I'm afraid the cook might mistake you for country sausage and fry you for breakfast. Of course, you can do as you want, but if I was you I would go on back to bed and quit dreaming I was home in bugland."

Suddenly from the crowd behind Ebe there came the sound of that disquieting buzz. Like a dropped sack, Mr. Moffat disappeared beneath the desk, while the crowd in front scattered—except Zap and the stranger. The stranger had paused to extract a bee from Zap's whiskers; and Zap had paused perforce.

The stranger crushed the insect beneath his heel, while Zap with a white face and trembling hands lurched weakly against the cigar counter.

"It's all right," called the stranger.

Mr. Moffat slowly reappeared.

"What do you mean bringing bees into this hotel?" he queried angrily, his left hand slightly raised as if to ward a possible attack from this aerial artillery.

"Never mind, Lem," said the stranger, laughing. "That must have been a stray one which got lodged in somebody's clothes. There are bees in that room. Couldn't you possibly find another?"

"It's as I told him, Mr. Cary," answered Lem earnestly. "There isn't a vacant place in this hotel where a fly could squeeze in. I'm sorry, but it's a fact."

Mr. Cary stood rubbing his chin thoughtfully.

"Well, I don't intend to sit up the rest of the night, if I have to lie down and sleep on the floor here," he mused. Suddenly he slapped his leg delightedly. "I've got it. When I came in this evening, I noticed a truck loaded with hay standing in the yard back there. If it hasn't gone, that's my room. No objection is there?"

"Sure not," said Lem cordially. "If you like I'll have the hay covered with some sheets."

"I guess it will do without sheets, thank you." He turned to Ebe. "You fellows are welcome to part of it, if you want. It's under the stars, but I don't think we'll freeze."

"If it's somewhere to lie down and there ain't no bees, I'll surely join you. I am sleepy as a nigger in Summer." There was simple gratitude in Ebe's voice.

Cary leaned across the desk and whispered in Lem's ear. The clerk looked critically at the delegates.

"All right, if you say so, Mr. Cary. But mind, no noise."

"We are going to wash away our troubles in a little grape-juice," said Mr. Cary in a confidential tone to the delegates. "But be careful. This is a temperance burg, and this grape-juice is brewed out of hops."

Followed by the gentlemen from Swain, he cautiously tiptoed after Mr. Lemuel Moffat, who was disappearing through a rear door.

It may have been the excitement of the day followed by the more poignant excitement of the night, or it may have been some hidden potency in the beer served by Mr. Lemuel Moffat in the crowded cubby-hole at the rear of The Planters, a potency which failed to affect Mr. Cary's wakefulness.

Whatever it was, the delegates found no difficulty in sleeping on the hay which filled the body of the motor truck.

They slept soundly. Even the cautious turning of the wheels failed to disturb them; the semi-obscurity of the back streets did not waken them; the familiar odors of the open country knocked in vain at their dormant consciousness; the occasional jolting of the carefully driven truck only served to settle their relaxed bodies into a more perfect repose.

STEP LESSNER came early to the convention hall the next morning. He was in high spirits. His clear eyes and ruddy cheeks gave evidence of a night spent in refreshing slumbers; and his smile, a mind free from worry. He listened without comment to the rumors which were going the rounds of the hall, that the Judge had appealed to Griggs, who had returned an insulting message, that Danby and Moss had been seen together in the elevator at The Planters, that Parsons would withdraw Judge Beckwith's name and throw his support to Griggs. Nothing seemed too incredible to receive a hearing. But Step only smiled that superior smile of a man who knows what is going to happen but is keeping it to himself.

When the chairman rapped on his desk at nine o'clock and the secretary began to

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call the roll, Step's smile gave way to a look of anxiety. The delegates from Swain County had not appeared, and their absence would leave Judge Beckwith a clear majority of the delegates present. This was a contingency for which he had not provided.

"Mr. Chairman—" Step was on his feet the moment the roll-call had been concluded—"I move that the convention transact no business until the representatives from Swain County reach the hall."

Parsons rose. The cloud of yesterday was beginning for the first time to lift from his spirits. Had Fitzhugh in some way persuaded Moss and his fellows to stay away from the convention? It seemed incredible. He dared not let the idea possess him, but the hope would not down. If Fitzhugh could only keep them away until after that first vote.

"Mr. Chairman," said Parsons, "under the rules we would be justified in proceeding at once to business; but we do not wish to be in a position of taking undue advantage of the tardiness of the gentlemen from Swain. I move that they be given fifteen minutes to get here; and if, at the end of that time, they have not arrived, we proceed without them."

By the vote of Parsons' men this resolution was carried.

Step hurried from the hall. On the steps he met Fitzhugh Cary, who, travel-stained, dishevelled, but in the best of spirits, called out a cheerful—

"Good morning, Step."

But Step did not pause. Instead he leaped into an automobile and sped to The Planters.

"Where are the Swain County delegates?" he demanded of Moffat.

"Gone," said Lem indifferently, as he pulled down the corners of his vest. "They left last night."

"Left? What do you mean 'left'?"

"What does a man usually mean when he says 'left'? Our country cousins have gone away, vamoosed, departed. They are with us no more."

Step stared at him blankly.

"When—where did they go?" he stammered at length.

"Don't ask me," said Lem calmly. "They didn't leave their forwarding address. All I know is that about one o'clock that bunch of plow-chasers came down here and said something about bees in their room. They fooled around a few minutes and then beat it through the front door there. I haven't seen them since. I guess I could live happy if I never did again."

AT JUST about this time Ebe was trying to remain asleep. He did not wish to wake up, because he was drowsily aware that when consciousness returned his head would be aching abominably and his stomach feel acutely uneasy. But a shaft of light, filtering through a crack in the wall before him, at last rested on his eyes. With a heavy groan, he drew himself up on his elbow and looked at his watch. It was nine-thirty!

"Thomas Jefferson and Aunt Minervy!"

Ebe scrambled to his feet and, without glancing before him, leaped from the truck. A hay-rake interrupted his descent. He bumped off it, landing face downward in the moist earth.

A twinge shot through his knee as he picked himself up and hobbled to the large double door in the wall. It was fastened from the outside. He forgot his headache, his bruised knee, the threatening disquiet of his stomach, as it dawned on him that they had been tricked; for a glance upward at the lofty, peaked roof, and he knew he was imprisoned in a prize tobacco barn whose only exit was this door.

Five minutes later there came the sound of steps, a key turned in the lock, and the excited delegates rushed out as the door swung open.

"What d'yer mean, lockin' us up in here?" shouted Ebe.

He found himself confronting a large man, rather bullish about the neck and hairy about the hands, who brandished threateningly one of those sticks you instinctively feel has lead in its end.

"You tell me what you're doin' locked up in my barn, tryin' to break the door down," answered the man.

Ebe halted suddenly. He felt an earnest desire to explain matters rationally and calmly.

"Darned if I know how we got in here, friend," he said. "All I know is we went to sleep in Pepperton and only woke up a few minutes ago."

"Pepperton! Then you've come thirty miles. Pretty sound sleepers, seems to me. Maybe you can explain how you came to be sleepin' in that thing?"

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Ebe began his explanation about the bees, when suddenly his forgotten stomach forced itself on his notice. He staggered backward and leaned limply against the side of the barn. He was very sick.

With anguish in their faces his companions watched him for a moment; then they joined him. And when at last the delegation returned to the grinning spectator, who had watched them without comment, their faces had lost their bronze hue of the sun; instead they were pallid, with that ghastly pallidness which accompanies a clammy forehead and moist, stringy hair.

"You come on up to the house and set down. You'll feel better after a spell," said the man kindly.

"We've got business," muttered Ebe. "Kin you telephone to Pepperton from your house?"

"Yes, come along."

The glow of health was beginning again to burn in Ebe's cheeks when the operator announced that he was connected with Convention Hall. Faintly there came to him the sound of cheering, a wild burst of applause.

"What's that for?" he shouted into the telephone.

"Judge Beckwith has been nominated," answered a cheery voice. "He's addressing the convention now. Who are you?"

Ebe did not reply. Grimly he replaced the receiver on the hook.

"Say, friend," he said to the farmer, "does a train down Swain way pass here today?"

"Yes, at two-twelve. Station's two miles over there. You stay and have your dinner and I'll drive you down."

Ebe turned to his companions.

"I guess we needn't look fer them milk buckets that young fellow was promisin' us," he said with a sigh.

THAT evening there was a gentle knock on the door of an inconspicuous room in The Planters; and obedient to a summons from within, Lloyd Parsons turned the handle and entered.

"Say, Fitz," he said cautiously after he had closed the door and dropped into a chair beside the tall, angular man with prematurely gray hair, "I don't want to know too much, but I am curious to find out how you persuaded those fellows to leave. I have been hearing all kinds of queer stories, and one of the papers has just had a telegram from Moss, whom they have been trying to locate all day, saying they withdrew because they were unchangeably for Griggs and didn't want to block the convention any longer. That's bunk; they certainly hadn't any such idea when Step Lessner talked to them at dinner last night."

For answer there came a low buzzing ominously near Parson's ear.

"Look out! What's that?" he cried, drawing away and briskly fanning the air with his hand.

Fitzhugh laughed.

"That's the baby that spilled the beans," he said.

Parsons looked at him curiously.

"Are you making that noise?"

Fitzhugh's lips became two slightly parted but unmoving straight lines, and an angry buzzing filled the room.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" said Parsons, emphasizing each word as he uttered it. And a moment later, with the pleased air of a man making a discovery, he added, "And, by Jove, you can't tell where it is coming from."

"No, the sound is wherever you are made to think it is."

Parsons stared at Fitzhugh; there was frank admiration in his eyes.

"And you got them out with that?"

Fitzhugh rose and placed his hand on the manager's shoulder.

"My son," he said, "before you undertake to manage another crowd of farmers you want to learn something about them. And I'll give you one pointer: if you surely want to break up the camp-meeting, just turn a gang of bees loose on it. The mourners will never stay to argue with them."

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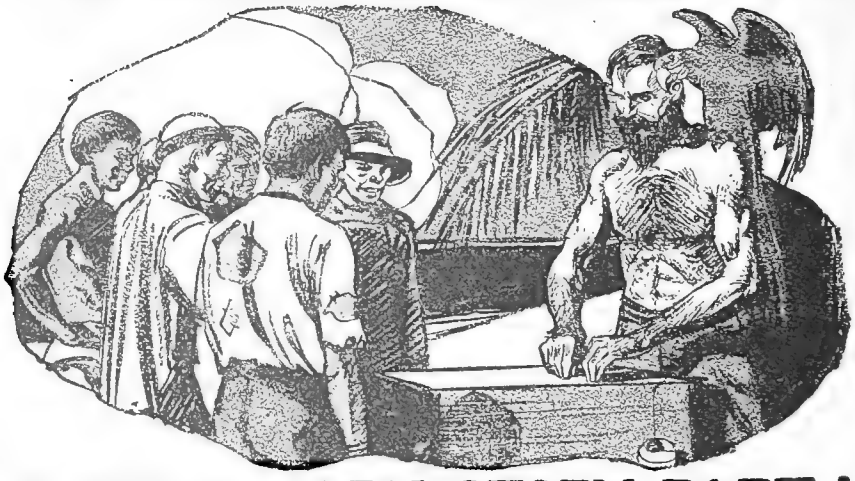
THE STORY OF WILLIAM HYDE



A FOUR PART STORY. PART I

By Patrick and Terence Casey

CHAPTER I

I MEET WITH MR. WILLIAM HYDE AND HIS PARROT MOGUL—AND THEN MEET WITH THEM AGAIN

MANY tall ships have nosed out of 'Frisco port and walked down the old sea-roads to the South Islands and found good cargoes there; and sometimes there, too, they have found that which all young, lean-thighed, quick-blooded men desire more even than they desire the love of woman, and which they call by the name Adventure.

There was a ship in the island trade, the *S. S. Fairhaven*, that put the Farallones in its white wake, upon a time; and with it, below in the hold and smeared with oil and sweat, I, Colum Kildare, went as an oiler. I was raw at the work; I was awkward in the world; I was but lately quit of college. I was young, in a word, and Adventure lured me.

Adventure lured me more than did books—Adventure and all the flamboyant creatures of Adventure: the tropics-bitten sailormen, the yellow and black and brown dwellers in the grass huts beneath the drooping palms, the laughing, dusky girls with flowers in their hair, the barefooted white men who walk the burning beaches—the whole colorful pageant that forever streams past in the wet, warm places of the world. And it was in Honolulu, the haven after the long traverse, that I met with my first creature of Adventure, my first white man of the beaches. It was in Honolulu that I first met with the shell-and-pea man, William Hyde.

He stood in the middle of King Street, before the colossal gilt-mantled statue of Kamehameha the Great. The day, approaching its noon, was unspeakably hot. And full in the white-wash of sun he stood, and he wore neither hat nor shirt.

A thick red beard—a beard so preposterously red it was almost the color of blood—ringed like a ludicrous dog-collar his saffron moon of a face. On his deep chest was moistly pasted a gorilla-mat of flaming hairs. And cocking itself upon his stark sun-saffroned shoulder was a red-eyed parrot, one intense shimmer of green.

Before him clustered a living horseshoe of black-and-tans. He was making padre-mystery for that semicircle of Hawaiians and Chinese, Portuguese, Japanese and *hapa-haole*. On the upended box before him were three halves of walnut shell, worn

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smooth by much handling. Also, the familiar rubber pellet. It was a shell-and-pea game.

I approached along the line of iron paling which encloses the vast lawn and the hau and palm trees of the Capitol, formerly the palace of Queen Liliuokalani. I leaned against that fence and watched. I could see Hyde easily above those black-and-tans. Inches over six feet tall, huge-limbed as a jungle tree, he appeared gigantean. His stark shoulders reached high above the medallions on the pedestal behind him; the towering figure of a king above in comparison did not dwarf him; he was another king.

I saw the great-veined hairy hands of Hyde shift the half-shells. I saw the pea, the while, go back to the crook in his middle finger with a bunglingness that was yet too much for the black-and-tans.

A steady dribble of cash tinkled into the flask, broken at the fat of the neck and pendent by a string from the edge of the upended box. All the time, from out the depths of that red dog-collar of beard, the big fellow sing-songed continually the incanting rigmarole of the shell-and-pea man:

"You playum. I payum. No *pilikea;* no trouble. Very simple. There they go, three in a row. Ah-ah-ee! The pea, the elusive little pea. Him shellee catchum pea. *Wiki, wiki;* quick, quick! What shellee catchum pea?"

Then, as he shifted and shifted the half-shells and waited for some brown finger to point out and wager on a certain half-shell when, all the while, the pea was reposing in the crook of his middle finger, he went on:

"Went Jallan Batoe. Went round and rounda nd up the Barito to the Jallan Batoe. And then some, then some, bee-lieve me! saw the red, red rubies in the Robe of Holies. In the Jallan Batoe. Saw the rubies and the diamonds and the pearls and the emeralds in the Jallan Batoe. And the God, the Green, Green God! And then some, bee-lieve me—*cluck, cluck!*"

The last was a clucking of tongue striking palate that is indescribable. It sounded metallic in the dead heat. It seemed an exclamatory conclusion to his half-incoherent rigmarole, like a "presto!"

"What shellee catchum pea? No, no. Him shellee no catchum pea. See? You pay-um. Sabe?"

And so on and so on. His shell-and-pea-man's patter was a steady rataplan of Hawaiian and pidgin-English words. It was incessant. But not again did he repeat that odd rhythmic hodgepodge about the Jallan Batoe.

The black-and-tans were like children drawn hither by the blare of a hurdy-gurdy. They came scurrying from all directions—from South King Street, from Punchbowl Street and, nearer at hand, from out the cool porticoes of the Opera House on the left and the Territorial Judiciary building just behind the statue of Kamehameha. And they were a hurly-burly of races—young Hawaiian boys with their perpetual smile, sleek Japanese girls in brilliant kimonos, *obis* and short white socks, old and withered Chinese, and Portuguese of a blunt-nosed, stupid type.

All watched, wide-eyed, but only the Chinese, those born gamblers, took a fling. The game was altogether one-sided, for Hyde cheated them remorselessly out of all that was staked. After a little, even the Chinese left off playing; the tinkling of money dribbling into the broken flask grew fainter, stopped utterly; and in vain then Hyde conjured them. He spat disgustedly, put his huge hands to his hips and contemptuously swung his crisp blue eyes around the horseshoe.

And thereupon, as he put his hands to his hips, I noticed that which I had not noticed before. In his naked belly, plainly marked in the yellow of his tropics-bitten skin, were two groups of long scars, old and blue and dirty, and strangely horrible. They lay to either side of his umbilicus. They were almost exactly alike in length and form, color and position. Indeed, they were as evenly balanced as a tattooed design.

But they were no tattooed design. I counted those scars. Those scars were four on either side of his middle; and now, as Hyde swung about on his heels, the better and more contemptuously to survey that cluster of black-and-tans, I noticed, furrowing his back on each side of his spine, another dirty old scar. There were five scars on either side of his waist, then—as many scars as a man has fingers and thumbs.

And they were enormous scars. Hyde had put his hands to his hips just below those scars; his hands were spread out to their full finger stretch; and his hands were huge hands. But they did not nearly reach to the ends of those scars. Those scars

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were like marks made by enormous preterhuman hands.

How he had come by those scars, of course I did not know; but instantly upon my brains appulsed the most hideous and revolting of thoughts. I thought of tortures, nameless tortures, uncouth nasty tortures; for, oddly, those old scars, monstrous as they were, minded me of enormous hands that clutch and gripe a man at the middle, that tighten like steel pincers, like the talons of a bird and, sinking through shirt and skin and flesh, tear at the meat of the abdomen, tear open the belly and disembowel a man, laying his entrails bare and dripping to the day. It was an unspeakable thought.

Hyde scooped up the halves of walnut shell, bent down, drew up the flask by its string as one would draw up a ship's bucket dangling overside by a rope, and emptied the contents of that broken flask into one huge paw. He swung his flaming dog-collar of beard, then, into the hooked beak of that emerald parrot on his shoulder.

"Now we catchum grand big Kanaka drink, Mogul—*cluck, cluck!*" he said, with that indescribable noise with which he had concluded his half-incoherent rigmarole about the Jallan Batoe.

And he turned about, and followed by a few ragamuffin Japanese and *hapa-haole* boys, the parrot swaying upon his naked shoulder, he moved largely along the *makai* side of King Street toward the beach.

NOW, a week after this incident, the tramp *Fairhaven* drew up its mudhooks from Honolulu harbor and steamed, after the manner of traders, among the Eight Isles of Hawaii. On the *kona* coast of wild Kauai we made into a bay where there were two islands and a mountain behind the shore. Near the water's edge of the smaller of the two islands, on the eye or windward shore toward us, was a single monkey-pod tree, gnarled and branched like an algaroba tree, and bearing, some twenty feet above the ground, a perfect parasol of small, dull pink flowers.

We put into this quiet bay, I remember, to take aboard a score or more head of horses from the *Kaweila* (Lightning) plantation. The horses, marked with a lightning streak on the flank, were stalled in rude railed boxes on the main deck amidship, just abaft the cabin. The work done, I stood at the starboard rail as the sun sank, and watched the crew, off on leave, make the beach in the ship's yawl.

I saw the men divide on shore. Many wore yellow flannel shirts; many wore no shirts at all. I saw them flounder up the sparkling shingle beach and disappear into the little white houses that clung like swallows' nests to the green slope of the mountain. And I remember I thought not of the empty glamour of Adventure now, but of broken men who descend to shell-and-pea games in the Tropics, and carry frightful scars upon their bodies and parrots, green as emeralds, upon their stark saffron shoulders.

From a little white house far up the mountain slope came, of a sudden, an angry shout like the bellow of a bull, then the chatter of many shrill voices. I saw a man rush out of the house followed by many pattering, piping Japanese women—a big red-haired fellow with a green parrot swaying on his naked shoulder as he ran.

"The shell-and-pea faker!" I breathed.

The man came racing down the slope, the pattering Japanese women following with quick tiny steps, and shrilling wildly. From the little white houses came more women—Hawaiian, Japanese and Chinese—and some men. I saw some of the yellow flannel shirts of the members of the crew. It was a mob.

Just then, in the monkey-pod tree on the small island, arose another great commotion. I saw the tree shake its pink parasol, and a number of snow-white *koae* birds whirred up into the air. A man had jumped down from a bough under the pink parasol to the ground. He was garbed only in a *lava-lava*, a white cotton cloth which bound his loins and hips. He looked like a native; he was lean-thighed and brown as any Hawaiian. He crawled out to the water's edge and, hand shading his eyes, gazed toward the commotion on shore.

Hyde waded out into the water and, the green parrot still clutching his shoulder, came swimming hand over hand toward the ship. But the parrot was getting doused. On the sudden it screamed, fluttered up into the air, and then alighted on the man's red head.

The mob took up that scream with ringing shouts and scattered along the beach. Some of the yellow-flannels of the crew commandeered the ship's yawl and fell to shoving its nose off the sand.

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Then from the islet came a resounding *flap*, louder than the nervous chatter of the women along the shore. The man in the cotton *lava-lava* had lifted a board, taller than himself, from the grass and had fallen with it upon the corrugated bosom of the bay. I knew it for a surf-board. He lay outstretched upon it, his feet kicking the water at one end, his hands paddling on either side of the board, dog-fashion.

A great shout went up from the beach; the yellow-flannels left off trying to launch the yawl; all watched the man in the *lava-lava*. They thought he was about to head Hyde off. But he, too, was making straight for the ship, and far from trying to head Hyde off, he seemed to be trying to escape from Hyde. His hands dipped and scooped furiously; his feet worked like those of a squirrel in a treadwheel.

I saw, as he quickly drew nearer, that the instep of his feet gleamed whiter than the shingle beach. I knew thereat that he was a white man.

Back on the beach the mob still waited, wondering what would happen when the two reached the ship. The surf-board bumped, head-on, against our stem-plates, and hand over hand, spry as a spider, the man came up the anchor-chain.

Leaning over the rail, I saw that he was quite a young man, tall, of goodly size and of wiry frame. The hair on his bared head was black; it clung to his scalp in little wavy curls that shone like oily jade in the sun. As his head appeared above the rail he looked aft toward me with a pair of smoldering gray eyes.

"Hello, kid," he greeted. "Don't mind me. Just let me get rid of this red-haired fellow and I'll tell you all about it."

He swung one brown leg over the rail. Below, the surf-board continued to flap against the chain; above, he remained at the hawse-hole, looking toward the approaching Hyde, the water glistening on his brown legs and steaming up in the sun from the cotton *lava-lava* about his middle. The muscles on those brown legs from knee to ankle were visible as cords; his eyes, when he had looked at me, had smoldered with a certain anger and fear; and it struck me suddenly that he was tensed as if for a struggle.

I ran forward hastily. Hyde had come alongside, and the chain was swaying now under his climbing weight. The man in the cotton *lava-lava* bent far over the rail, brushed the parrot off Hyde's red head and grasped Hyde by his slippery shoulders. The parrot gyrated in the air on wet wings and screamed stridently; the mob ashore cheered lustily; Hyde shouted:

"What's the matter! Let go, you fool!"

"I won't go back!" shouted the fellow in the cotton *lava-lava*. "—— you! I'll see you overboard before I go back!"

I crowded along the rail against the man's straining arms. Those arms were straining at Hyde's shoulders to make him loosen his grip of the chain and pitch into the water below. I got a glimpse of Hyde's red-bearded face—a bloody moon of anger and passion. Then I looked into the gray eyes of the other.

"There's some mistake!" I shouted breathlessly—I shouted to make myself heard above the grating screams of the parrot. "He doesn't want you. He's running away—he's running away, too!"

CHAPTER II

WHEREIN I AM INTRODUCED TO MY FIRST REMITTANCE MAN, AND HEAR FROM THE SHELL-AND-PEA FAKER SOMETHING OF THE JALLAN BATOE

THE man in the cotton *lava-lava* released his grip on Hyde's shoulders, stepped back a pace and, his jaw slack, looked from me to Hyde in amazement.

"Running away, too!" he repeated as if incredulous. "Why, I thought——"

In a kind of helpless bewilderment he eyed Hyde from the frayed ends of his clinging trousers to the hideous scars in his middle, and from the hideous scars in his middle to the unkempt top of his red head, as that big fellow clambered, dripping wet, over the rail. Then, as the parrot settled down once more on Hyde's slippery shoulder and began preening its wet greenness, ruffled by the brushing hand of the man, he stepped toward Hyde, his right hand extended, his gray eyes sparkling in the sun.

"*Aloha, malahini!*" he said cheerily in Hawaiian. "Welcome, stranger. And excuse me for that rumpus just now; but I thought—why, I thought you were after me! God knows, I don't want to go back to that miserable plantation."

Hyde interrupted, laughing deep and rumblingly in his red beard.

"That's a good one!" he exclaimed,

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withdrawing his hand from the other's grasp to slap his wet thigh. "*Me* after *you!* And I thinking you were trying to head me off!"

"But what's the lay, stranger?" asked the younger man. "Why are all these people after you?" And he pointed toward the shore.

Here on the shore the mob was scattering. They had tired of straining their eyes through the sunlight in an attempt to watch the surprising and friendly pantomime on the deck. They were disappointed in the outcome of the chase, though not too greatly disappointed; they appeared to be almost relieved to let Hyde go; for I heard little trilly laughing sounds from the clusters of kimonos and white *holukus*, and great chuckling roars from the whisky-thickened chests of the yellow-flannels of the crew, as men and women trudged up the beach and slope, and disappeared into the little white houses.

"Shell-and pea game," explained Hyde dryly. "They discovered the pea in the crook of my middle finger. I barely got out of that tea-house alive. Yes, siree; had a regular cat-fight with those Japanese women, I did. Is my beard all there?" And he laughed loudly. "But tell me," he added: "What was all your rumpus about? What are you running away from?"

"Debt," returned the younger man. "I was a *luna*—that is, a foreman—on the Kaweila plantation. Got into debt for my found and clothes to the company. They always fix it that way; it's the only way they can hold the whites on this paradise of the Pacific. Pay you a lot of money as wages, but they know you will gamble it all away on chuck-a-luck, fantan, or *che fa*."

"Do you mean," I asked, "that the company would hold you here for debt?"

"Exactly," said the man in the cotton *lava-lava*. "That's a sort of law here and all through the Eight Isles. I'm in debt and they won't let me leave Kauai until I've worked and paid up; but I know only too well that the longer I stay here in this lonesome hole the deeper and deeper in debt I'd become. They fix it that way, I tell you! I know. I've been here on Kauai for six months and oh, I'm sick of it!"

The sun-sparkle in his gray eyes went suddenly dull.

"When I heard as a *luna* that you were coming for twenty-six head of horses, I left Kaweila and came around the foot of the mountain to the village. When you nosed in here yesterday I floated out on a surfboard last night to Makai Island—that's the little island nearest us and the sea. I watched you derrick those horses aboard today, and here I am."

"Well," said I, "come below and we'll all have a drink on it. I've got some better stuff than they sell on shore, and that's the very reason why I didn't bother to go ashore."

"Fine!" said the runaway debtor. "I've been living so long on *okolihou* and the ferment of ava-root, I've forgotten what real high-proof whisky tastes like."

"Same here," said Hyde. "I've had nothing but swipes since I landed on these islands." He twisted his head around and spoke to the shimmering emerald bird on his shoulder. "Now we catchum grand big American drink, Mogul—*cluck, cluck!*" he said with that concluding indescribable noise of tongue striking palate.

As we entered the hatchway to the fo'c's'le, I said:

"My name is Kildare—Colum Kildare."

Above me on the iron ladder the debtor laughed merrily.

"There's enough brogue in that name to start a fight, eh, stranger?" This to Hyde behind him. Then to me: "But I'm glad to know you, Colum boy, honestly. You can call me Fitzhamon. That's Irish enough surely, isn't it?"

"Fitzhamon?" Hyde repeated questioningly, ere I could answer. "Not of the Fitzhamons of Kerry—the Fitzhamons of the Reeks? You don't happen to be any kin of Lord——"

"No, no," the man in the *lava-lava* cut in, quite hastily I thought. "Not at all."

He stood beside me at the foot of the ladder looking up; and Hyde, stepping quickly down the ladder, peered intently into his face. In the light from the hatch above his face now seemed strangely pale beneath its tan.

"Come to consider it," said Hyde slowly, "you do look somewhat like the Honorable Sarsfield Pembroke Fitzhamon." He nodded his red head deliberately, sagely. "Yes; very like."

Fitzhamon laughed—a little nervous laugh.

"Oh, come," he said. "Lords and Honorables, that sort of thing is neither here

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nor there. All I know is I'm on the beach. Left Kaweila without a penny, without a shift to my back even. I'm on the beach, I tell you, man, till I get some money which is awaiting me at Pnum Penh."

There was food for thought in Fitzhamon's statement. I looked at the man, I remember, with an added interest. He was my first remittance man.

"Well," I said, as I laid out a pair of dungarees to clothe the man's nakedness and an extra large pair to relieve Hyde of his wet trousers, "well, we touch near Saigon on our way to Australia with these horses. From Saigon it's only a run, I believe, up the Dubequem River to Pnum Penh in Cambodia. Which means, Mr. Fitzhamon," I added with a smile, "that if you'll work for your passage—play the workaway, you know—I'll see the chief engineer and try for a job for you. Meanwhile, you'll have to lay low."

"*Aole poina oe!*" he admonished airily. "Don't forget now."

I did not mean to forget. There was something about the man—the smile of his lean jaws, the sun-sparkle in his gray eyes, the toss of his curl-crop of head—something that delighted my youth and magnetized it to him. He looked, indeed, with his close-curling hair, not so much like a Greek hero as, I would imagine, Brian Boru must have looked, long ago, in the bogs and misty reeks of Ireland.

THE men seated themselves on the edge of the ground tier of iron bunks. I produced from my locker a flask of good whisky and unscrewed the metal cap. Hyde gulped half the contents down without a word, then passed it to Fitzhamon. Hyde had no more than made that indescribable clucking, as he wiped his lips, than Fitz had finished the flask. I produced another.

Outside the day was deepening into dusk, purple and oppressive. Inside, between the rows of double-decked bunks and in a closeness of heat that caused the parrot on Hyde's shoulder to nod with sleepy heaviness, we sat and sweated and drank whisky.

Suddenly Hyde began singing:

My name is Willyum Hyde, Willyum Hyde—
My name is Willyum Hy-y-de,
And I'm off to claim my bri-i-de,
And I'll get the God bee-si-i-de,
For Willyum Hyde!

Perhaps it was because he was given to swinging out his name, now and anon; perhaps it was because of a rolling note which remained over from his sing-songy rigmarole; but at any rate every time Hyde mouthed his name he lingered with a kind of fondness, over the last syllable of his baptismal name, like a child showing its pleasure over bread and jam, like a child cuddling each mouthful under the tongue —"Will-yum Hyde, Will-yum Hyde!"

Now, there was that in the drawling rise and fall of the song, but particularly in the mention of the God, which reminded me strangely of Hyde's rigmarole in Honolulu.

"This Jallan Batoe gibberish, Hyde," I asked, "what does it mean?"

Hyde paused so sharply in his repetition of the song that the very tune seemed to have been sucked down his throat.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Don't you know?"

"No," I said. "I heard your rigmarole in Honolulu, but the whole thing was a mere jumble of words to me. It still is. What does it mean? What is it—this Jallan Batoe?"

"Oh, pshaw! It's all hearsay!" broke in Fitzhamon, with an emphatic dismissing toss of his curl-crop of head. "The Poonan and their sacred Jallan Batoe, their Golden Women and their Green God are a tale you'll hear everywhere in the East. I've heard of it down in Malay Muk's in Banjermasin, where men from all the ragged edges of the tropics meet and talk over Dyak-plaited mats and gin-pahits. Beachcombers have talked of it to me when we sat on the bales of hemp before the *godonns*, the warehouses of Singapore. And even at Mahe in the tiny Seychelles Islands out in the Indian Ocean, I've heard of the Golden Women and the Green, Green God. It's all a fantastic legend, nothing more, about a Field of Stones—that's what the Jallan Batoe means in Dyak; a Field of Singing Stones."

"Singing Stones! But why singing?"

Fitz shrugged his shoulders as if stumped.

"I'll tell you, man," said Hyde, leaning toward me suddenly. "I'll tell you what the Poonan themselves say about these Singing Stones!"

The hand lifting the flask to Fitzhamon's mouth stopped abruptly. He looked with liquidly bleary eyes from me to Hyde. His eyes remained on Hyde, as Hyde went on:

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"The *Toewan Deewa*, the Poonan say, made the world. It was a vast task. But their Greatest God is not so infallible as our God; for when the creation of the world was consummated the *Toewan Deewa* found in His possession a quantity of superfluous material. It was waste left over from making *orang*, or men. We are supposed, you understand, to be made of the same substance as these Stones. But the *Toewan Deewa* had made enough men and plenty; so on the Seventh Day when our God rested, He rolled up in His fingers, as a Chinese does an opium pill, the whole mass of rock waste. Haphazard then, He cast it in a round ball down upon the earth.

"It struck upon a mountain in the heart of Borneo and crushed the top of that mountain in like a cocked hat, to form a great, deep hollow bowl or crater. In this crater the Poonan now live; they live in caves in huge stones. For with the jar of the fall, they say, the waste of men's souls broke into these massive stones. And that is the Jallan Batoe, the Field of Stones. And every night these stones—the souls of men who would-have-been—wail out in a weird death-croon their misery at their fate."

"Beautiful!" I said, with the ardor of youth. "A beautiful story. But of course it's the heat; the same case as that ruin of Karnak, the famous vocal Memnon, the Singing Stone of Egypt. You say the croon is only at night. Well, that's because the colder air of the night causes those stones to lose their heat with vibrations that disturb and hum through the air in this weird croon."

"I believe you're right," Hyde nodded. "The Jallan Batoe is up in central Borneo, near the confluence of the River Loeang with the River Barito, as the Dutch turn the names. And that's almost directly and exactly beneath the equator; so those stones are hoarding up the heat of the belching sun throughout the day——"

"But what is it—the Field of Stones? In your rigmarole you spoke of a Robe of Holies and all manner of precious jewels. And just now, Mr. Fitzhamon talked of Poonan and Golden Women and Green Gods. I do not understand all this; I don't know what to think." And in my embarrassment, my eyes sought Fitz.

Fitz had not moved that flask one inch nearer his lips; his arm seemed paralytically suspended in air. He was not looking at me. He was eying Hyde with drunken attentiveness—an odd drunken attentiveness.

"Oh," Hyde explained easily, not noticing that, "the Jallan Batoe is the Sacred City of the Dyaks, the natives of Borneo. As I said in my rigmarole, all kinds of rubies and diamonds and emeralds and pearls are there. It's the treasure-house of Borneo. It's been so for hundreds of years. Gems are like marbles in the Jallan Batoe——"

"But are they safe there? Can't white men——"

Hyde snorted. The parrot, drowsing on his shoulder, awoke at the snort and blinked its red eyes at me.

"White men? Safe? Why, man, the Jallan Batoe is safe from the coolest dicer with life ever spun forth by the Foochow road! It's another Lhassa. It's kept inviolate as a holy place by a whole race of people, an old, old ear-slitted race—these Dyaks, I mean. The *Orang Laut*, or Sea Dyaks of the coast, hold it so sacred because of its many legends that they fear even to breathe the name of it. And it's the same with the wild head-hunting Dyaks of interior Borneo. They hold it in such mortal dread that they never have dared to break its sanctuary by attempting to enter it—and they are the *Orang Benua*, lad, the brutish savages of the jungles!"

With those huge hairy hands of his he grasped my knees.

"I tell you," he said, "it has never been entered by the natives of Borneo, save only the Wild Men of the Wilds, the Orang Poonan, who now live there. It's the Holy of Holies of these Wild men of the Wilds. And no Malay, Chinese nor Boegis of Borneo ever has entered it. No white man ever has entered it and has lived to tell the tale. No white man, I say—but one. I am that one white man! I saw the jewels, I tell you—the jewels and the gem-studded *Mandau*, and the Golden Women, and the Green, Green God!"

CHAPTER III

AN ACCOUNT OF WHAT HAPPENED IN THE FO'C'S'LE

FITZ had been eying Hyde with a drunken attentiveness that was odd. Well now, of a sudden, he leaped afoot, staggered, steadied himself with a hand on a bunk and shouted:

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"—— you, nobody ever got into the Field of Stones! It's all legend, all hearsay. Nobody knows where it is. The heart of Borneo? How do we know? That's Dead Man's *Negorei* where no white foot has ever trod. Men have tried there; yes. In search of the Green, Green God they have adventured among the blacks in the dark of New Guinea and the Solomons. They have sweated and rotted and died without finding it. Men have donned masks and outlandish rigs to get into Lhassa for it. White men, insane men, drunken men just like us! It's all a myth!"

"Myth!" Hyde laughed bitterly. He got wearily to his feet and faced Fitz.

"Fitzhamon," he said slowly, "I know who you are. The last time I heard of you everybody in Malay Muk's was talking of a certain lieutenant at Fort Alfred in British North Borneo who had sold some British rifles to the Sultan of Brunei. I'm not mentioning any names; I don't accuse you; but all I say is that I can imagine something of what you have gone through, Fitzhamon, since you were cashiered from the army.

"Yet I tell you, Fitzhamon, what you have gone through is nothing to what I have suffered since I saw the Jallan Batoe! I saw it, I tell you—I saw the Field of Stones and the Green, Green God! And I'm living in a tomb since I left *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa*, my Golden Feather of Flame. She was a Golden Woman and *Orlok Radenajo* of the Poonan and—and my wife! I left her to what dread fate I know not; but I do know that that terrible doubt is what has made me a beachcomber, a shell-and-pea fakir on the rat-walked sands of the South Pacific. I'm wandering always. I can't forget!"

Fitzhamon laughed—a great drunken laugh. I saw Hyde's beaded moon of face redden like a rash. We all were drunk with the alcohol which was overpowerful in that closeness of heat. We might come to blows.

"Gentlemen!" I interposed. "Gentlemen!"

Hyde caught up my words.

"'Gentlemen'?" with sarcastic inflection. "Oh, yes, we're all gentlemen here, fine gentlemen. I, a Cambridge man, a 'full-blue,' the son of a barrister and cut out to be a barrister myself. And now—the beachcomber, Willyum Hyde, the cheat, the mountebank, the shell-and-pea fakir who walks the beaches of the Sea Islands, and who consorts and shares the grub and beds down with Kanakas and Tahitians and vagabond white men as casteless and ragged as himself. And Mister Fitzhamon! He's even a finer gentleman. He's the son of an Irish baronet and English lord, a graduate of Sandhurst, a former lieutenant in the British army!" He shoved his big red face close to that of Fitz. "Why, you —— bloody traitor——"

HE NEVER finished. Fitzhamon's left hand, clenched like a knot, swung from the bunk. It landed flush upon the side of Hyde's red-bearded jaw.

Hyde staggered back. The parrot fluttered up from his shoulder, beat its wings wildly against the flooring of the deck above, and cawed hoarsely.

Head down, Hyde rushed Fitz. Fitz backed away, down between the two rows of double-decked bunks. His hands whipped out like striking snake fangs, like stinging knouts. They struck Hyde. Hyde came on. They struck Hyde all about his lowered red head. But Hyde came on. He did not move an arm. He held his arms wide open.

It was tremendous. Fitz backed slowly, swinging from the shoulders, from the hips; drawing his right foot up almost to his left with a right swing, coming up on his toes with a hook.

But Hyde came on. He was ready for the blows. They flailed either side of his head, fanged into his blue-scarred stomach and hairy chest; but they did not stop him, did not even jar him. He came on. His wound-pitted abdomen was as firm and elastic as tempered steel; his chest bulged round as a barrel.

Like sweat balls, he shook the blows from his red face. Arms wide, his legs spread, his great shoulders crouched, he came on, ever on.

Of one thing I was glad. The ill-fitting dungarees on the men were fresh from the ship's wash and hence, I knew that both men were unarmed. There would be no gun play. There would only be, for Hyde, a terrific collapse if Fitz smashed him to the deck; or a terrible struggle for Fitz once those long gorilla arms caught him; and either way, until that time, all I could do was to wait and watch.

Fitz kept flitting back and back. He paused once momentarily, without striking

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a blow, as if he were unable to understand Hyde's tactics, Hyde's refusal to return his blows. Hyde was after him then like a bulldog who sees his chance to catch hold.

Fitz flitted back. He struck out and continued to flit back. At last, fifteen feet down the aisle between the bunks, Fitz backed slam up against the bulkhead.

My heart throbbed in my eyes; I felt he was done for then. There was no way to turn; Hyde was in front, the bulkhead behind; he was caught in an *impasse*.

Hyde rushed in. He rushed into Fitz's right arm that had shot out like a piston-rod, straight and rigid from shoulder to knuckle-joints. Hyde was caught full upon the point of the jaw; his great red head tilted back sharply and so far that I thought his neck would break; his legs bent in at the knees and, for a moment, he tottered.

In that moment Fitz stepped around him, away from the bulkhead and back up the aisle the way he had come. And in that moment, as he stepped around the dazed hulk of man, like a flash Fitz brought over a left which coiled round Hyde's back to his kidneys. That looked like the finish of Hyde.

But instead, Hyde roared with pain and fury and shook his red leonine head, stiffened his knees and turned round. Fitz followed up his advantage with lightning jolting blows; but with the rapid recuperative power lent him by his huge bulk, his great strength, Hyde had recovered from the daze. Arms wide, he came on.

Fitz backed toward the hatchway. He backed up against the ladder. In the twilight from above, his tanned face looked a pale saffron, slick with sweaty emotion. Again Hyde rushed him. Fitz tried to dodge to one side. His foot slipped in the puddle of water that had dripped from both Hyde and himself when they had changed into the dungarees. He went down on one knee. And then Hyde got him!

With those long-muscled arms, he grasped Fitz about the middle. He lifted Fitz up to his bulging hairy chest, wheeled half round on his heels, and then hurled Fitz bodily through the air between the rows of bunks.

Fifteen feet away, against the bulkhead, Fitz brought up. There was a dull thud, sickeningly louder than the hoarse cawing of the parrot; then a *squash*, as Fitz fell to the deck.

Hyde waited, his chest heaving as if it had cast off some weight, his arms once again wide open. But the dark pile on the deck against the bulkhead did not move.

I ran down between the rows of bunks for a look at Fitz. He was lying all sprawled out like a frog and groaning feebly. I struck a match. His head was cut at the bulge of the forehead near the right temple. Suddenly, as the match flared out, I saw his lips move; but I could not hear on account of the hoarse cawing of the parrot.

"Call down your parrot, man!" I shouted to Hyde. "I can't hear a word."

Hyde made a noise—that indescribable clucking—and the parrot settled down upon his shoulder. Then with my ear close to Fitzhamon's mouth, I heard him gasp:

"Water! Water!"

I gave him water. His eyes opened staringly. And they remained open while I bathed and bandaged the cut on his head and while Hyde and I lifted him into the lower bunk opposite my own. I had hopes that some of the crew would not return from shore that night and that he therefore would not be disturbed from the bunk. He would be all right, I thought, in the morning.

"Here," said Hyde. "Give him some of this." And he handed me the flask which poor Fitz had never finished.

I emptied some of it into Fitzhamon's throat. His eyes closed heavily and then, for a while, he tossed restlessly.

Hyde sat down upon the edge of my bunk opposite. His face was glossy with sweat. For a long time silently he stared at the tossing form in the other bunk. Then abruptly, he said:

"It was just like that—just as I hugged and threw Fitz! There was *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa* sacrificing herself—running back into the Jallan Batoe and clutching the Green, Green God to her fear-chilled breasts; and I chasing after her, trying to stop her, shouting aloud with nameless dread; and suddenly, from nowhere, that monster man got between us. I didn't know where he came from or who he was, but I knew he was no Poonan.

"He was bigger than I and I was bigger than any Poonan. And he grasped me, so he did—with two huge arms—about the middle—as I did Fitz. He almost squeezed the bowels out of me—you see the scars—and it was with his bare hands, mind you

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—just as I grasped Fitz. Yes, sir; just like that, just like that!" He repeated the words in a monotone of pain, and rocked from side to side, and looked down at his great veined, hairy hands.

"Come, come, man," I said. "Take some of this yourself." And I proffered him the unfinished flask of whisky.

He looked up at me oddly, his eyes half-lidded from the effects of the alcohol he had drunk; then he looked down at the flask in my hand and shook his head.

"That's all I remember," he said, still shaking his great mane of head. "The next thing I knew, I was outside the Jallan Batoe. I've never been able to get back into it again. And I don't know, I don't know what happened to her. Oh, what did they do, those golden rats! What did they do to my Golden Feather of Flame!"

He opened his eyes full upon me. His eyes were of a crisp light blue, and I remember that then, of a sudden, they seemed strangely steadied with a peculiar light. It was the light from some inward misery—some deep misery of soul. I put my hand on his shoulder—the one not occupied by the parrot—in silent sympathy.

He looked up at me quickly.

"But what am I talking about? You don't understand. But sit down, sit down, and I'll tell you all about it. A drink? Why, sure!" And, as if noticing the flask for the first time, he took it from my offering hand.

I sneaked a look back over my shoulder at the form of Fitz. No longer tossing about restlessly, he was breathing thickly now, in a sleep brought on by exhaustion from the fight and superinduced by the effects of the strong whisky that was overly strong in the sudorific closeness of the fo'c's'le. I sat down upon the edge of the bunk wherein he lay.

Then I looked with wonder and great awe at that beaded moon of face before me, with its thick red dog-collar of beard. The pores of Hyde's face were oozing liquid in slow trickles down into that flaming fringe where, for a breath, they held and took round form, then dropped to the entangled hairs on his heaving chest; and then splashed upon his knees or huge hands on the mats on the deck.

Suddenly with that indescribable clucking as he wiped his stubbly lips, Hyde set his broad shoulders. The parrot swayed with the shrugging movement, but did not open an eye. Hyde leaned back. He pulled up one dungaree-trousered knee and clasped his huge hairy hands about it. Thus, rocking slightly, he began:

CHAPTER IV

OF AN INSANE VENTURE AMONG JUNGLES AND TUNNELS, WHICH LED HYDE INTO THE JALLAN BATOE

BEFORE ever I descended to the beach and became a shell-and-pea man (said Hyde) I was an orchid-hunter "out" from England. I was only a lad playing at rounders when I first got the "fever" in the orchid-conservatories of a celebrated nobleman. I won't tell you his titles, out of deference to poor Fitzhamon's desire to remain more or less nameless; but I will tell you that it was through that hothead's resemblance to him that first placed who Fitz is. That nobleman, old now, with the dew of his youth turned to frost upon him, is Fitzhamon's father.

It all occurred while I was on a visit with my parents to County Kerry in Ireland. I well remember the day when I was playing with some new acquaintances at rounders; that day when I batted the ball over the hedge of Lord—I mean, the hedge of the country place of Fitzhamon's father.

I had lost the ball and it was up to me to find it. I climbed over the spiny hedge of blackthorn, tearing my clothes, and there before me I saw the long, low glass-houses of the immense orchid conservatories. I saw, in the glass roof of one shed a jagged hole where the ball had gone through. To get it I entered the greenhouse.

Then it was that I first felt the wish to hunt orchids. I can't explain it; but the sticky tropical heat of the glass gardens—artificial though it was—the outlandish little breath-blossoms clinging like many-colored butterflies to bits of bark and moss and muck and earth-veneered stone, somehow inoculated me with that virus which makes the orchid-hunter. The longing to chase the *burong-utan*—the birds of the jungle, as the Malays sometime call orchids—gripped and tore at my heartstrings like a first love. Some years later—but a month after I had got my "full-blue" for football at Cambridge—I was "out."

Then twelve years ago I found myself up

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in the dark heart of Borneo looking for Coelogyne Lowii, the "Flower of Mercy" of Borneo, which is frailer than a soap-bubble, as delicate and white as pearl dust. I was north of the River Loeang in the unexplored country between the Barito and the outskirts of the territory of the Sultan of Koetei. It was overgrown, choked, terrible country. It was "Dead Man's Country," as Fitz said.

Day after day I broke through the interlaced lattice-work of growths, where the green sweated and the very birds were noiseless; day after day through a hot twilight under a canopy of plashed trees and giant ferns and ropes of creepers. And then, one day, rising before me, towering above the mystery of jungle, I saw a volcano peak, fully five thousand feet high.

Near the foot of its jungled slope was a number of great balks of *bilian*, or ironwood trees, which are like the cocobolo of the Philippines. The balks were almost hidden, overgrown with the voracious, noxious growths of the jungle, but from their heaped-up formation I easily recognized them as a ruined fort. My Dyaks—of whom I had a crew of three for my *gobang* —told me that they were the ruins of the fort that was formerly the stronghold of the insurrectionary Dyak chief, Soro Patti.

For twenty odd months, two long years, Soro Patti had held that fort against all the might, men and money of the Dutch. He had only a small band of Dyaks; but legend has it that he was helped by the Orang Poonan—the wild men of the wilds—whose Field of Stones, my Dyaks now told me, was located in the crater of that volcano.

It appeared that the volcano, long extinct, had been hollowed out by the forces of nature to form an immense crater. And in that crater was a cluster of stupendous stones, a gigantic hodgepodge of monster rocks somewhat like the ruins of Golconda. My Dyaks said that the Poonan lived in huge caves in those stones.

Now I had heard of the Poonan. In every festering slum of a native quarter within thirty degrees of the broiling line, on burning shingle beaches and even deep in the rotting *rhuk*, I had heard tales of the Poonan and their sacred Jallan Batoe, their Green, Green God and Golden Women. So I looked up at that volcano with a sort of awe.

I saw that it was jungled thickly up to a certain high line, then there seemed to be a space of low-knarled forest, and above that the volcano rose in steep sheer barren lava cliffs. I knew it would be hard work for me to scale those precipitous cliffs—and I have scaled the perpendicular heights of Table Mountain in Cape Colony for scarlet Disa orchids and the lilac-blue Disa Longicornis.

But I wanted to try. I was for at once forgetting my creamy Coelogyne and climbing that tall volcano. I wanted to get into that home of legend and mystery and awe. But my Dyaks—Christian boys from the Dutch schools of Banjermasin—would have none of it.

"*Deewa* is *baik*," they said with clasped hands. "Our God is good. But the Green, Green *Deewa* of the Jallan Batoe is a terrible god!" And they shivered, but they would not budge.

I left them. For a whole day I climbed upward through and over seas of brush and lush and uprooted trees. It was a hopeless tangle, almost impenetrable, seemingly unending, in which there was nothing whereby I could judge my progress. Long-armed trees and coilers and dripping mosses shut out the sky overhead; a solid unbroken wall of ferns and purple undergrowth closed me behind; while above and ahead were only more trees and coilers, mosses and undergrowth and titanic ferns.

I seemed to make no progress at all. Sometimes I lost hours creeping like a snail over a couple of hundred yards of spiny, impenetrable brush.

I CAMPED that night in a space between three great *durian* trees. Here the growths were sparser than the rankness all about. Clearing off these growths with jack-knife and bleeding hands, I uncovered a slab of boulder encrusted with a thin mold of black, teeming earth. The slab was lying at an angle on the mountain-side so that it was almost level. On it I started a fire of wood, dead and as dry as one reasonably could expect to find in a jungle that sweats. I ate some *rawa-rawa* and *cho*, and some other native fruits my Dyaks had gathered and given me on parting. Drawing out my pipe I prepared to smoke until the doglike bark of the *kijang* to its mate announced that it was sun-up out in the world. I could not sleep.

The mists of evening settled down about me like cold cobwebs; the night settled down

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inky black and as solemnly still as the dead. I smoked above a smoking fire. Suddenly, in the solemn stillness, I became aware of a distinct sound. It was the steady chill trickle of running water. A river! I leaped afoot.

"Of course, a river!" I thought. "There must be some sort of river draining off that crater. Otherwise under those terrific cloudbursts called tropical rainstorms, that crater would be a lake. I'll follow that river into the Jallan Batoe!"

But I could not walk upright in the direction from whence that trickling sound had come. The growths were too entangled to permit of that; they were impenetrable, a thick wave of lush. I crawled on all fours over that wave, full of crests and troughs, my hands and knees sinking deep down through the spongy surface.

I could no longer hear the chilly trickle. The solemn watches of the night were alive with the sounds I made: the snapping of twigs and shoots, the flutter of unseen birds and the buzz of insects aroused by my movements from sleep. Then in the blackness I seemed to be slipping dizzily down the wet surface of the growths. That wet surface was on a slant.

"A runway!" I gasped. "I'm slipping into a sunken path." But the air held a smell like the sodden smell from a swamp; so I added, the next moment: "It's the bed of a river—the river!"

I slipped head-first into that river. Floundering, I started to swim. But the river was not deep enough for that. It was only a stream. I got afoot, and with the water surging against the sides of my legs, took twelve steps straight ahead. That brought me to the opposite bank of the stream.

I retraced half a dozen steps back the way I had come. Sure thereat that I was in the center of the stream, I began in the blackness, wading up and against the current. It was easy wading, save for a few lianas dangling from overhead, the slight press of the current against my knees and the sharp feel of pebbles beneath my well-worn boots.

And then, without a bit of warning, the current eased, and the night blackened deeper than it had been before—if that were possible. I struck a match along the corrugated side of my German-silver match-case. I looked about. I looked about in a great wonder, for I saw, in the sparkle of the match, that I was in a gaping black hole. That hole was a tunnel in the mountain side—a tunnel through the living rock—a tunnel into the Jallan Batoe!

I broke into a run. Running, the match out, my hands outstretched in the blackness before my face, I made for the right-hand bank of the stream. I ran diagonally some thirty feet and then brought slap up against the side of the rock tunnel which was wet and cold and slimy with lichens and other forms of rock moss. The stream was down to my ankles now; the way was only a slight upward slant; and I knew from all this that the stream had grown shallow in spreading out.

With my right hand feeling along the fungi-wet rock I walked on through the solid viscid blackness. Here, in that rock tunnel, the stream was clogged with dank *cogon*-grass, tall as myself, which had sprouted in the water like reeds or kelp. A cold wind that came from somewhere ahead was rushing through the tunnel. The *cogon* rustled wildly in that wind. It swished and snapped like clammy hands about my face.

I lost all sense of time, of distance, in going on and on. Then abruptly, without any preparation other than a sudden brightening of the blackness, a welcome warming of the air, I felt the rock wall break off into nothingness.

I stopped dead, as upset as a blind man who has lost his way. Quite frantically I looked about, but for an interval, so accustomed had my eyes become to the blackness, I could not see. Then I found myself looking upward, straining the back of my neck, the pupils of my eyes. Far, far above me, I saw the jagged rim of the crater, like a vast round O. In the center of that O was a round red ball. The moon! I was in the Jallan Batoe!

The Jallan Batoe! The Field of Singing Stones, the Treasure House of Borneo, the Holy of Holies of the Poonan! Between the two tropics, in the hot places of the earth, other men were trying for that fabled sacred city—steering barnacled ships through uncharted seas, reefing to strange winds; breaking through everlasting jungles, sweating and rotting; and all, all dying without a glimpse of the Golden Women, or the precious Green, Green God!

And I, Willyum Hyde, a ne'er-do-well orchid-chasing Englishman, was in that

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Jallan Batoe which all sought so vainly, with so much blood as the price. Think of it! In the Jallan Batoe where, for all I knew, no white man ever had been before!

CHAPTER V

RELATES HOW HYDE WAS RECEIVED BY THE POONAN, AND MORE PARTICULARLY BY THE GOLDEN-HAIRED *POA-POA* BEARER

NOW I saw in the brightness of moonlight (continued Hyde) that I was on a solid lava path. It was a sunken path; up to my shoulders on either hand were embankments of earth; and on those embankments, stretching away out of sight, were immense caladium and panadanus, arborescent ferns and great orchid- and creeper laden trees. It was another jungle.

"They're like Egyptian pyramid-builders, these Poonan!" I said to myself. "Through the centuries, from the outside, they have carried in this earth in rattan-woven baskets or *lebets*—hundreds, thousands of *lebets*, of men!"

A terrific hum drowned my voice. I crouched back and took out my long .38 on its .45-frame, the while I shook as with ague in every limb. It was not the night mist that caused me to shake; it was fear. I thought I saw, back among those trees, a number of monster wild animals, crouched as if ready to spring at me.

But they were stones, stupendous stones, chiseled and wrought into resemblances of rhinoceros, of *gajahs* or elephants, of huge orang-outangs, of tiger-cats, and of outlandish prehistoric-looking mamals, the like of which I never have heard.

I went on. That humming still thrummed against my ear-drums. Of course I quickly surmised that the hum came from the stones, those gigantic, hideous, but well-named Singing Stones. Yet it was hard to believe; it was a terrible form of singing. A monstrous wave of sound, it reverberated from wall to rock wall of the crater, struck awe into my soul, and caused me to expect to hear, any moment, a rending of ground as the walls avalanched down with the sound.

Still, revolver in hand, I went on. And now, the very moment that I entered the path, that moment I felt the presences. They were like invisible devils. A sudden scamper would wave the foliage at my shoulder not a foot away; I would hear through the hum the low sound of voices, like bodiless whispers; and then, like glow-worms, little fires would blaze up back in the lush, and go out. I could see no one.

"The rats!" I said to myself. "They're just like rats!"

And I shivered all over continually. I was afraid that a reed *sumpitan* dart might speed or a *mandau* in unseen hands might cut me down at any moment. Yet, despite my perturbation, I noticed after a while that those fires were like winking, wicked eyes in the crouching animal-like stones. They came from the heart of those stones.

"Caves!" I exclaimed. "My Dyaks said that the Poonan dwelt in caves in these stones. I see it all now. Men are running ahead of me through the jungle on either side—that's the scamper in the lush. And those couriers are warning the Wild Men—that's the bodyless whispers. And those eyes winking out—why, that's the Wild Men banking their fires!" For I sniffèd, even as I uttered the words, the smoke of struggling flames.

Picture it! I was deep in a sunken path; to either side of my head, ferns and creepers were moving where others, close at hand, were still; fires were glowing like fireflies and dying down as under an extinguisher; and the bodyless whispers were playing an undernote to that monstrous hum.

And now, of a startling suddenness, came a new sound—a terrifying wild medley of sound. Tomtoms beat hollowly to a quick erratic one-one time, cymbals crashed brassily, war-conchs bellowed like foghorns, and *cogon* whistles and bamboo flutes shrieked and shrieked to heaven.

"They're coming!" I thought. "The Poonan are coming!" And in a funk of fear, with warmly moist and trembling hand, I swept my revolver over the brush above and the path before me.

A stench like that of the *saat*, the stinking night badger, snailed into my nostrils. From around the bend in the path ahead gleamed a feeble saffron light. I aimed my .38 in that direction. Appeared then, as I waited, a smoking stinking torch, the flowing roundness of a woman's arm, and then the woman *poa-poa* or fire-bearer herself.

Man, man! She was a woman! She was beautiful—really, rarely, wondrously

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beautiful! Tall she was, almost as tall as I, and of statuesque proportions. Her skin, white as cream, glinted with a kind of sheen, in the feeble *poa-poa* light, as if she had been delicately dusted with gold. And her hair! No mere suspicion of gold there; it was the real thing. A thick tawny red like the very rawness of gold, a riotous mass that twisted and coiled, like hot Spanish ingots, back from her broad low forehead, and that curled about her transparent tiny ears like bits of fine filigree.

But in her brows and lashes—there was contrast for you! Black as the deepest *danau* swamp, and thin as a pencil line were her brows; and black, too, were her lashes —black, and so long and silky that they curved slightly upward at the ends as if they had been molded to the soft roundness of her cheeks.

And those silky brushes of lashes shaded with tender shadows the oddest of eyes—eyes almond-shaped and yet not almond-shaped, that were so big that the slight downward slant of the upper lids seemed almost a pose. Eyes that were blue as lazuli and still, like lazuli, in the saffron *poa-poa* light, the golden glint from her creamy skin, seemed to reflect in their depths a yellow gleam, the whole so transfused with blue and yellow rays that the irises were a subtle green in hue. Odd eyes indeed; Egyptian eyes like Cleopatra had; and eyes, too, just like Cleopatra's, that could make a man do anything. Ah, she *was* a woman!

She was robed, this regal Egyptian-eyed Golden Woman, in a marvelously wrought gown of snow-white egret feathers—a gown too magnificent for one less full-blown and beautiful to wear. You know, egrets are caught on the Mahakkam, the Barito, the Loeang and other rivers of Borneo, and the mother birds, during the pregnant season, robbed of their white egrets for the various usages of dress of the women of civilization. Yet never before in all my life had I seen a gown made entirely of white, white egrets!

It was like the *holuku* which the missionaries evolved to cover the brown charms of the Hawaiian women, even to the ruffle of feathers that banded her twin cups of low, firm breasts, 'round to the back. It was without waistline. But, like a gauze of mosquito netting, it showed the supple, splendid form of her with each sinuous movement of her body as, upholding the *poa-poa*, she glided with pantherine grace toward me.

BEHIND her pressed more Golden Women, quite several hundred of them. They carried those instruments of sound. All were tall, almond-shaped in the eyes, and really beautiful too. Their skins were of a light yellow velvet, somewhat darker than the *poa-poa* bearer's, as if indeed they had been dipped bodily into molten gold. But all, save the drooping-lidded, green-eyed leader, were luxuriantly blue-black of hair.

There were no men, nor signs of men. At that my heart began to pound more normally. I had braved the dangers of getting into this sacred home of legend and of awe, terrible and abysmal; surely now I could brave the dangers of confronting beautiful women, armed as they were only with cymbals and horn-conchs, tomtoms and *cogon* whistles. I lowered my heavy .38.

But I did not halt. The golden-haired *poa-poa* bearer did not halt. We approached each other.

"*Komite! Lengeau!*" she cried in the Poonan language—a language which I afterward discovered was a mixture of Dyak, Malay and Tartar, but mostly of Dyak and Malay, which languages I already understood: "Go! Fly!"

But I came on. And seeing that I did not stop, that I looked at her without fear, with only reverent admiration, she cried out again—a frantic warning which sounded shrill with distraction even amid that awful overtone of the stones:

"*Nda, nda*, no, no! *Ak*, bad! Here is only *banja sæsa*—plenty trouble! Go! Fly!"

I was close to her, very close; I could feel her excited sweet breath upon my face. I stopped thereat. She held that *poa-poa* low between us, waving me back. That fire licked at my red beard; its smoke stung into my eyes and sickened my nostrils. It was just a bundle of sago leaves powdered with *damar* resin that smoked like a stinking smudge. I recognized it as a *tambatong*—a charm to drive me away. I laughed at it.

"*Kas, Kas Deewa!*" I shouted loudly in Dyak, with the boldness of the white man. "I'm after the Green, Green God!"

She looked at me with her greenish eyes from under those blackest of pencil brows, those longest of silky, curving lashes. She looked at me sharply. And as she looked, her sensitive nostrils quivered in a sort of fear or terror.

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On the sudden, as she looked, she bent toward me and swung the *poa-poa* in her right hand up above her head so that its feeble light fell full upon my face. She reached out her slim tapering left hand then, and with trembling fingers felt of my red beard, of my red hair, as if they were something wonderful in texture and color. Her Egyptian eyes, wide as a child's, stared and stared into my eyes as into a second wonder. Then, quickly, her hand dropped from my beard to her side.

"*Seek laha wook!*" she cried, the timbre of terror shaking her voice just as the thrum of the stones was shaking the air: "Hair red as blood! Eyes blue as the sky!" And she bowed her head to the lava floor of the path before me.

The women behind surged forward in a wave as if the better to view me. Their many eyes glittered like almonds of dew in the moonlight. Suddenly they shrieked in Poonan:

"Hair red as blood! Eyes blue as the sky!" And bent their backs low, like grass before a wind.

The golden-haired *poa-poa* bearer shivered erect. She took a great breath, leaned far back from me and then, with amazing swiftness, traced with the *poa-poa* nine downward and upward strokes in the air before my very face.

I remembered thereupon. I had heard that that repetition—nine times of anything—was a sign to the Poonan, sacred and mystical and full of awe, the symbol of some dread power. I'm not superstitious, not more than humanly superstitious, anyway; yet I could not help it. I fell back a pace.

"*Arrê!*" the woman announced, upflinging both arms above her head, the *poa-poa* in the one blazing out with unwonted vigor at these sudden actions. "Behold! It's the *Mopeng-Lon*—the Man-Child of Genghis Khan! It is the Sending—the Sending of the *Mandau! Arrê!*"

And shrieking hysterically these words, the connection of which with myself I could not comprehend, she swept with her golden hair the lava floor before me nine distinct times.

"*Ahê!*" chorused the women in high, excited tones. "Lo! It *is* the Man-Child of Genghis Khan! It is the Sending of the Sword! *Ahê!*" And they too bent down, then up again, and down and up again exactly nine times.

I watched and listened in a sort of stupefaction.

Suddenly from either hand of the lush-grown embankments, with a noiselessness uncanny amid all that singing of stones and wail of voices, a hundred men—squat, slit-eyed, light-yellowish-skinned men—jumped down in scores into the path.

They were garbed only in *jawats* of animal hides, which were like the *lava-lava* worn by Fitz, save that they hung down between their legs. In two long lines against the embankments they stood, their hands clasped about the center of tall *sumpitan* blowguns, their heads bowed upon their hands.

"Hair red as blood! Eyes blue as the sky!" they rumbled in Poonan deep down in their chests, a rumble like an echo of the humming overhead. "*Ahê!* It *is* the Man-Child of Genghis Khan! It is the Sending of the Sword! *Ahê!*"

I walked on. Impelled more by what I thought was expected of me than by any boldness now, like a man in a dream I walked on into the Field of Singing Stones between those bowed ranks, those bent backs. Behind me, after I had passed, I could hear beneath the humming in the air, the sounds of those men forming. Like a multitude of golden rats they swept along after me.

CHAPTER VI

ABOUT DIVERS THINGS, BUT MOSTLY ABOUT THE NATURE OF A ROOF FOR THE NIGHT

NOW, as Hyde talked, night had fallen, thick and black and suffocating, as if the whole world were cloaked under some colossal cassock. I could not see Hyde's face. I could only see the sweat balls glistening, like diamonds in the hot dark, upon his red halo of beard and upon that gorilla-mat of hairs on his chest.

I got up upon the edge of the bunk wherein Fitz was sleeping, and lighted the rope-wick of the slush-lamp over our heads. Hyde paused. As I stepped down I heard from Fitz a low moan, as if some pang of pain had disturbed his restless slumber. Bending down and looking into the bunk, in the dim light from the swaying lamp I saw him twist his bandaged curl-crop of head and settle over on his side, his back to us. Then he was very still.

I sat down again upon the edge of the

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bunk under the slight sway of the swinging fo'c's'le lamp.

"Go on, Hyde," I urged. "You were like a man in a dream, you remember, and the natives swept you along into the Jallan Batoe like a multitude of golden rats."

He nodded his red head. On his shoulder the parrot was dead with the heat like a withered green bulb. Hyde opened his loose drunken mouth in the depths of that glistening halo of beard. Then, distinct against the monotonous wash and lap of the water of the bay, I heard his voice spouting once again that hare-brained, staggering story:

The round red ball of moon (said Hyde) had dropped suddenly out of sight below the jagged rim of the crater. It was that fabled darkest hour of the night which is supposed immediately to precede dawn. With the multitude sweeping after me, the air humming in my ears and the light from the *poa-poa* of the beautiful golden-haired woman, who was just behind me, feebly winking out the way, I made the bend in the path ahead. I made that bend, then in sheer amazement halted dead.

The embankments had fallen sharply away, and the path ahead was now no longer a path but an avenue, wide and grass-grown as a lawn, and lined with tall palm-trees that looked like feathery black dusters in the night. On each side of the avenue, stretching away and away, were many stones, huge as office buildings and crouched like uncouth animals, the whole muffled by the shadowy shapes of tropic trees and growths.

I remember that the singing of those stones seemed louder now in the colder airs of the late night; and I remember also that I wondered, even in my amazement, whether all those stupendous stones had been carved out by the hand of man or wrought into their strange forms by torrenting rains and wearing processes of nature.

Thus, looking down the avenue, I saw far away at its end the monster stone of all. The sight heightened my amazement, if such could be; for that stone, jutting out on the left-hand side of the avenue, reared like a mountain above all the other stones. It was a Goliath among stone giants. It was wrought into some vast shape that looked at that distance like a sphinx. And that I could make out its shape at all at that great distance was due to a remarkable feature. For the whole stupendous bulk of it glowed as limestone does in the sun—in all that blackness, a sparkling dazzling white!

"It's like the Taj Mahal!" I breathed. "It's a wonder of the world. Can it be some marble memorial to a dead king or queen?"

The wondrous Egyptian-eyed *poa-poa* bearer, seemingly having recovered a bit from her first terror and awe of me, stepped beside me, and as if in answer to my words —which of course it was not, as the words were breathed low and in English, a tongue which, even if she had heard, she could not possibly have understood—said softly close to my ear:

"That, O Man-Child of Genghis, is the Stone *Dobo*, the holy of holies of the Poonan. Therein are the Green, Green God, the *Tojout-Plo Sie* Throne of the Tartar Empire, and the Menacing *Mandau* of Genghis Khan!"

I smiled brightly at her, although the most I understood of her words was that this white stone was the Cave-Temple of the Poonan, and that in it I would find the Green, Green God. But, the idea in mind of somehow getting that Green, Green God forthwith, I started down the grassy avenue.

Far, far ahead, I saw that that avenue ended abruptly beyond the Stone *Dobo* in a broad black expanse, surrounded by the feathery shapes of palms. Those palms stood out like silhouettes in the white glow from the *Dobo*, and in the center of them the broad expanse seemed strangely to reflect that glow, its black surface rippling and glinting with a silvery sheen.

"It's water," was my instant thought. "The source of that very river which led me in here. A lake, no doubt, or a——"

I stopped both in thought and action. The slim, tapering left hand of the golden-haired woman was upon my sleeve, the while with the other, holding the *poa-poa*, she was motioning me toward the nearest stone on the right-hand side of the avenue behind the row of palms.

"*Sepau johop*, Man-Child," she said gravely, but loudly enough for me to hear in all that singing of stones. "Thy roof for the night."

"*Baik, O jipodoa radenajo*," I answered. "Good, O beautiful queen."

She colored charmingly at my compliment—a golden-red in the *poa-poa* light—

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but politely refraining from observing that, I bowed my obedience; for it was part of my vague plan now to play my hand very slowly, allowing the Poonan to lead and show me, ere I staked my all on a try for the Green, Green God.

Therefore, with the woman gliding with pliant pantherine grace at my side, I made quickly for that nearest stone. Above my head, as I passed through the space between two slim tall trunks, the feathery fronds of the palms waved slightly, yet with sound I could not hear because of the heavy thrum in the air. Beyond them, as I approached the stone, I saw that that whole immense stone was wrought into the likeness of a *gajah* or elephant—an elephant bent on its clumsy knees as if to receive a burden. And in each of the bent foreknees was cut a flight of nine stairs leading up to a black arched hole, fully twelve feet high, and without sign of a door.

I went up the nine stairs in the nearest foreknee. The stone thrummed about my ears, the very stairs beneath my feet vibrated with the exudation of that heat, so pent up during the hot day. The multitude, even to my gentle conductress, stayed behind. I wondered at that. I faced about ere I entered the gaping black hole. Below I saw that dark sea of faces upturned to me.

"They're watching me," I said to myself. "But why? What is there in this stone? Is it a really a roof for the night, as that exquisite woman said? Or is all this business and kowtowing merely a savage game, the end of which is in this stone? And what is that end? Are men lurking in wait for me inside, or some brutal form of torture concealed in the black caves—some torture silent and slow and horrible?"

I didn't know what to think, what to do. In my helpless fear-filled bewilderment my eyes sought out, in that watching multitude, the snow-white-clad figure of the lovely *poa-poa* bearer. There, beneath one of the palm-trees immediately below me, she stood. The *poa-poa*, still smoking like a smudge, was lowered before her face, and above it, in the cloud of smoke, her delicate oval face seemed to be floating free from her rich body as in a smoky nimbus. Beneath her molten riot of golden hair, beneath her slightly uptilted pencil-lines of eyebrows, her long silk brushes of lashes, her eyes were on mine. They were big, odd, greenish eyes, as I said, and whether it was because of the fitful gleamings of the *poa-poa* or not, they seemed to be dancing now with laughing lights.

"She's mocking me for my fears!" I thought. "She's opening her cherry lips to tell me to go on! But I'll go on, my beauty, never fear!" And swelled with a mighty bravado, I turned ere she could speak and went through that gaping arched hole.

I WENT through that gaping arched hole into a blackness blacker than the night outside; an inky, pitchy blackness, thick as jelly, and that shook like jelly with the terrific thrumming of the stone above, beneath and to both sides of me. Within the black heart of that stone the thrum was a monstrous wave of sound; it smote my eardrums like a gale of thundering wind. I struck a match hastily.

Protecting with cupped hands that sliver of flame from the draft through the entrance, I looked fearfully about. I found I was in a cave. No, it was not exactly a cave; it was more like a corridor, a great hollowed-out horseshoe-shaped corridor. For from the gaping hole by which I had entered to the hole in the other foreknee of the elephant, I saw that that corridor ran around in a half circle. Then the match went out.

But not until I had seen behind me, hanging from the wall of the corridor just inside the entrance, a number of sago leaves, bunched and prepared with resin for use as torches. I lighted one. It was not a *damar* torch; it did not stink like the *saat*, though it did smoke copiously. By its smoky flickering I made a circuit of the corridor, or until I came out at last upon the head of the flight of stairs in the opposite foreknee of the Elephant Stone.

Outside the Poonan still were clustered about the foot of the stone, the beautiful *poa-poa* bearer in their center, and all faces turned to her as if seeking enlightenment upon some subject. I did not doubt but that that particular subject was nothing less than myself. With the very thought I was made sure of it; for suddenly, as I appeared and looked down at them with the torch smoking in my hand, the golden-haired woman looked up in answer to my eyes, saw me, and cried out:

"*Arrêl* Behold and bow! The Man-Child of Genghis Khan! Behold and bow! *Arrêl*"

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Her voice seemed to come from afar off, a whisper of sound snailing between the strata of the hum. But she was not making game of me. In fact, I felt these were the very words she had been about to utter when a minute before I had faced around ere first I entered the Elephant Stone. For now I saw all those beautiful Golden Women and short squat Golden Men, led by the *poa-poa* bearer, bow down to the ground and up again, down and up again, one, three, six times.

But I was wearied of watching them go through this solemn rite of awe—wearied of watching and of trying the while to puzzle out the meaning of it all. More than that and to admit the truth, I had noticed in the inner wall of the corridor a little niche like a low doorway, and my curiosity was aroused; I wanted to see what was beyond.

So without waiting for the Poonan to finish their nine kowtows I turned and entered again the thundering corridor; and so, by the feeble blinking of my torch, came finally to that niche, the only recess in that whole horseshoe of corridor.

It was a doorway, surely enough. Beyond it was a cavernous room, throbbing and booming so mightily with the thrum of the stone that the sound clapped against my ears as I entered like the breaking of ton-weight combers on a rockbound coast. And so vast was that room that I could not see its lofty ceilings by the light of my torch, nor the walls of living rock at the far ends.

I went round the walls, one hand out feeling the way, the other upholding the torch above my head—a mere mote of light in a booming sea of blackness. Near the niche of a doorway, seeming tiny as a toy in all that immensity, I found a rush-plaited couch. And that proved to be the sole bit of furniture in the whole cave; there were no other garnishments of any kind, either useful or ornamental. It was just a cave, cyclopean as the chambers of Carthage, whose houses were vast as temples and whose temples were enormous cities.

Overwhelmed by the size and the sounds in that cave, I came back to that tiny couch and sat down. I sat down upon a black-spotted leopard skin, the velvet skin of the *pehang*. And knowing that among the Dyaks of Borneo the *pehang* is a sacred animal, I thought that it might be the same with the Poonan. Wherefore I wondered now that they should have placed a sacred skin there for me.

"What does it all mean?" I asked myself, amid that tremendous booming of sound. "What is at the bottom of all this business of sacred *pehang* skins, of kowtowing, of feeling my beard and hair, and of shouting about the blueness of my eyes? Always I have heard that the Poonan repel invaders, both natives and rash adventurers, with *mandaus* and poisoned *sumpitan* darts, with hideous tortures. And I have heard tales and tales also, of some dread nameless power which the Poonan possess—a power like that of the Thibetans, witnessed by the explorer, Sven Hedin—the Thibetans who can make a man disappear in a cloud of smoke by the mere utterance of a single mysterious word!

"But with me—all it is is Genghis Khan, Genghis Khan! What's the meaning of this reference to Genghis Khan, this constant, incessant reference to Genghis Khan?"

Of a certainty, I did not know. But Genghis Khan, about whose boundless dominions and bloody conquests all the world once talked—what, I thought, had these Poonan to do with that great Tartar monarch and war lord? And I, Willyum Hyde, an orchid-*shikar*, a vagabonding Englishman, what had I to do with that Lord of Lords, dead for seven hundred years, that they should call me Man-Child of Genghis Khan?

The question weighed on my mind as the immensity of that cave weighed on my spirit. I felt the question beyond me, unanswerable; as unfathomable as the booming black reaches of that cave. So as if it were a weight in reality, I tried to cast it off my mind.

And there was good reason why I should cast it off my mind. I had not batted an eye in sleep since I had parted from my Dyak boys, the morning before, outside the Jallan Batoe—something over twenty hours gone. Well now, as I sat upon that couch and cudgeled my brains, the while the booming hum of the stone clapped against my ears, I suddenly realized how exhausted I was. The tussle through the jungles up the slope, my strange experiences afterward upon entering the Field of Stones, had worn me out completely. I prepared for sleep.

I doused the torch to rid myself of the choking annoyance of its smoke, but more to shut out the enormity of that cave in which it seemed such a useless, tiny pinpoint of

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light. I lay down upon the pliant interwoven rush-fibers of the couch then, and in order to keep off the chill current of morning air which was sweeping through the niche of doorway, pulled over me that warm leopard skin.

Yet I did not sleep. All that dawning as I lay upon the rush-plaited couch, and the far-flung stone walls of the cave thrummed and throbbed like an angry sea about my ears, I thought, if a bit hazily, of golden-haired full-blown lovely women, who twined their fingers in my red beard and smiled at me with dancing black-lashed Egyptian eyes!

CHAPTER VII

AFTER WHAT MANNER HYDE FOUND HIMSELF A PRISONER IN THE ELEPHANT STONE

AND THEN quite suddenly I was wide-eyed awake; for just that suddenly the awful humming of the cave had boomed away like the final crashing peal of some majestic organ. Now wavered in the air only eery echoes that seemed to be rolling back from the black recesses of the cave.

Unable to move, the drums of my ear tightened to catch the slightest sound, I lay and tingled through and through with every dying echo. Then from the lofty ceilings the last echo moaned down to me like the cry of a wounded bird; and then—silence, heavy, strained, full of vague unrest, as if the very stone had put a finger to its cave-mouth in dread of the next happening.

Somehow, shivering, I got to my feet. With a tread, the softness of which was induced by the stealthy silence of the stone, I crept out through the niche of doorway, out through the gray-brightening corridor, to one of the two arched entrances, gaping open now onto a vista silvery in the ghostly light of dawn.

Dawn! At that I understood in a flash the reason for the sudden surcease of the singing of the stones. Only for a few hours prior to dawn—the few hours of the night that are the coldest in the twenty-four—did the stones exhale their heat, stored up during the blistering day, with vibrations that shook and hummed through the air.

It was just as you said, Colum Kildare. For now, with the dawn of day and the resultant warming of the air, the stones once more were hoarding up the heat; nor would they give out that heat to the awful accompaniment of that singing until the mists of night again swathed the Jallan Batoe in chill laces and caused those stones in that chill to vibrate with their own warmth, even as a man shudders in a draft. Truly, once you grasp it, an understandable natural phenomenon; but to a brutish savage mind, a mystery incomprehensible, awesome as the voice of a god.

But that silvery vista: It was the Jallan Batoe, the Field of Singing Stones, silent now in the first light of day—an innumerable number of towering rocks, carved like malignant mammals, and crouching in a perfect jungle of trees—gigantean trees, huge-rooted in black rich earth, hedged about by immense ferns and pandanus and lush-growths, and festooned with spidery networks of bloodcreepers and orchids. All looked purple instead of green in the gray light of dawn; and over all, rising up in filmy whitish volutes, the mists of the night were floating in thin filaments of clouds.

But not every one of those stupendous stones was embedded in jungle. Here and there between the stones were large patches of black earth, cleared and under cultivation, and all completely encircled by rude fences of stout *bilian* stakes and entwined coils of rattans to bar out boars, *tembadu* or wild cattle, and deer from slipping in and plowing up the ground.

Some of the patches had been recently and very crudely scraped, the seeds lying on the black ruffled surface like glistening dewdrops, after the most primitive fashion of farming known to man; others were merely soggy plots planted to rice; but the most were areas ripe with clusters of fruit trees, with sprouts of tapioca and pepper and waving jungle maize.

One patch had the appearance of a palisade of bamboo stalks—they were the slender canes of sugar; another was spiked with the tall broad leaves of some kind of tobacco; while still another upbore what looked like a clump of exaggerated greenish cigars, crested with great leaves twice as tall as a man, and laden with hundred-pound clusters of luscious yellow *pisangs* or bananas.

Far, far away, seemingly above the jungle, above even the towering stones, rolling high up to the precipitous foot of the shining

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black lava walls of the enormous crater, were spacious fields of gray-green grass, on which I could dimly make out sleeping herds of *gaurs* or young buffaloes, and restlessly moving droves of fat and tame *tembadu* and of deer of two species—the *plandok* or mouse-deer and the *kijang*, a sort of antelope, whose short, sharp, ringing cry, oft repeated, resembles the barking of a dog. All seemed blue-black in tone on account of the gray light and misty distance.

Now from where I stood in the left-hand entrance of the Elephant Stone I could not see, because of the trunk of the elephant which curved out and down on my right hand, that great glowing Stone *Dobo*, far down on the opposite side of the avenue. Nor, by the same token, could I see that lake or *danau*—if it were a swamp—which lay in the circle of palm-trees, just beyond the Stone *Dobo*.

But thought of that body of water caused me to look for signs of the river which I had followed the night before into the Jallan Batoe and which, I remembered, had seemed to vanish somewhere in the blackness of the rock tunnel. Yet, look where I would in all that wide space of growths and stones and cultivated fields before me, there was no glitter, no murmur, no sign nor sound of running water.

"It's an underground river," I said as if I had made a discovery. "I'm pretty sure it flows from that sheet of water in here, but it must be hidden under the original lava floor of the crater until, somewhere in that rock tunnel, it rises to the surface. There's no need of it irrigating these growths, however; the heavy tropical rains downpour more moisture than the earth really needs. And the earth! Why, it's not alluvium from the lava walls of the crater; whatever loose earth there is in those walls is held in, thickly coated over by those solid shining layers of lava."

No; the rich soil of the crater I saw was composed of compacted dead leaves and decayed twigs, of waste from the rocks and from the hollowed caves in those rocks, and of virgin earth, too, that was black as the earth of the Bornean jungles outside.

"They must have brought most of this earth in here in strings of rattan-woven *lebets*," I said, "strings of men and men! They're like the Inca terrace-builders, the Egyptian pyramid-builders, these Poonan, just as I first surmised."

I PAUSED. All of a sudden, interrupting with sound the very words in my mouth, the whole jungle seemed rousing to life. The big green pods of the bloodcreepers burst out with the noise of revolver shots into enormous and brilliant red blossoms; birds, fantastically colored of feathers, swooped in and out of the labyrinth of growths, fluttered and called high up in the thin clouds of mist still floating in the air; and I even caught, from somewhere in the cool beneath the stones, the plaintive grunt of a pig disturbed in its slothful comfort by some restless boar. Then, breathing faintly into my ears from those far-off fields, came the staccato ringing bark of *kijangs* calling their mates. It was sun-up.

It was the very sun-up that the night before, as I smoked my pipe over the smoking fire, I had resolved to await outside the Jallan Batoe. Hardly could I credit my memory of things and time, it seemed so utterly impossible that all I have related had happened to me in so short an interval as one night!

But looking up through the rapidly dissipating filaments of mist at the serrated rim of the crater far above, I saw the crimson shafts of sunrise streaking that vast round O of sky, for all the world like darts from the long *sumpitans* of the Poonan. And almost in the very trice that I looked up, just that quickly the topmost edge of the blazing ball of sun sailed over the east sweep of the great O!

In the sudden dazzle of sunlight I looked around again at the wonderful Field of Stones. My eyes stopped at the line of palm-trees which bordered the grassy avenue immediately before my Elephant Stone. Waving about the roots of those palm-trees were many poppies, through the rich coloring of which I must have trampled the night prior; for they were poppies, bloody red and leprous white in color. They were opium poppies. That I knew because I could see now, in the brightness of sunlight, the very incisions made in the capsules of the plants for extracting opium-juice.

Yet it was not that which startled me and filled me with an unholy fear. I circled 'round the corridor to the other entrance. I peeped out. It was the same.

Pacing back and forth, monotonously back and forth, at the foot of each flight of nine stairs, was a squat slit-eyed golden-

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skinned man, a long curving *mandau* or sword hanging from one side of his *jawat*, striking against his bare legs and glinting steely in the sun, and a blowing-tube or *sumpitan* of bamboo, at least nine feet long, aslant on his shoulder like a soldier's gun!

I understood then. I was a prisoner!

CHAPTER VIII

OF THE FIRST FLUTTERING OF LOVE, AND OF A GOLDEN WOMAN WHOSE EYES WERE EVIL

BUT I was a prisoner of a queer sort (and Hyde laughed in his red dog-collar of beard at the recollection). Indeed, in view of the way in which I had been kowtowed to and what with my added knowledge of later events, I'm pretty positive now that those two squat slit-eyed Golden Men, if they were a guard, were, before everything else, a guard of honor.

My first fear-filled thought was wrong. I was not a prisoner at all. As I remember that day it was nothing like the solitary captivity of a prisoner. It was more like a levee of some kingly Louis back in old France.

All day Golden Women and Golden Men, but mostly women, clambered up the nine stone steps to my cave, rattan-woven *lebets* on their backs and flaring torches, despite the hot light without, in their hands. The hoseshoe-shaped corridor of the Elephant Stone was bright at either end, near the arched entrances, with rectangles of sunlight; but within, save for the space about my couch close to the niche of doorway, the vast inner cave was dark. It was dark, that is, until the long line of *jawat*-girted and *sarong*-wrapped women placed their torches in cavities in the stone walls; whereupon the whole cyclopean chamber glowed, some six feet above the floor, with a belt of light that reminded me strangely of the Strand back home on a foggy night.

They laid before me those baskets on their backs, and opened them. I saw that they were filled with bananas and the roasted edible seeds of the *tamadac* or jackfruit tree, the roast meats of *tembadu* and pigs, and the jerked venison of deer. Before all that array of food and before that crowd of men and beautiful women, like some oriental monarch, I sat cross-legged upon the couch on the sacred *pehang* skin.

They felt of my red beard, of my red hair, as if to them, as to the golden-haired *poa-poa* bearer of the night before, my beard and hair were something wonderful in texture and color. They looked into my eyes for all the world like awe-smitten children.

"*Seek laha wook!*" they repeated softly. "Hair red as blood! Eyes blue as the sky! *Arrê!* It is indeed the Man-Child of Genghis Khan!"

Then, with more of fear shaking their voices than I had noted ever before, they added:

"It is the Sending! *Ahê!* The Sending of the *Mandau!*" And then down to the stone flooring before me they bowed nine times.

It was weird, uncanny. I began to feel not so much like an oriental monarch as like some stone-graven Buddha, cross-legged and squatting amid votaries and offerings in some dark grotto!

And all the while, remember, I was attempting to conquer an impulse to ask those people the meaning of their strange words and of their stranger treatment of me. I wanted to know what the color of my hair and beard and eyes had to do with Genghis Khan, dead for seven hundred years, that they should call me the Man-Child of that great Tartar emperor. I wanted to know what was the meaning of that Sending they spoke of—that Sending of the Sword. I wanted to know the meaning of those votive offerings. I wanted, dearly wanted, to shout:

"What are you going to do with me? What are you going to do with me?"

But instead and for good reason I said nothing. They called me the Man-Child of Genghis Khan—very well; as ably as my ignorance would allow, just that ably would I live up to that rôle, whatever it was. But I could not let them know that I did not understand. I was playing a slow game for the Green, Green God, leaving it to them to lead and show me, and I did not doubt but that they soon would show me. I would yet learn the meaning of all that kowtowing, of all that continual irritating talk of Genghis Khan. Till then, I could strive only to keep my welling curiosity in check.

Wherefore, to quiet my jumping nerves, I diverted myself by watching that endless line of men and of beautiful women. They were all beautiful really; but I watched them in search of her who seemed to me the most beautiful of all!

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"There's one," I found myself saying, "with lashes as long and curving and as black and silky, but—but her eyes are brown! Ah, here comes another in a blue-dyed pandanus *sarong*, with women carrying her baskets of offerings. Her face is oval and olive in complexion, with just the gilt of gold. She's a thoroughbred, I'll wager, from the train of her pandanus gown up to the top of her hair——"

Alas! The hair and the eyes always stopped my ravings. Always the eyes were oblong in shape and brown and brilliant as coalesced lacquer. Always the hair was black as the deepest *danau* swamp. And—must I admit it—I was looking for hair of the color of raw gold, and for lazuli eyes, Egyptian eyes, eyes like Cleopatra had! I was looking for the golden-haired *poa-poa* bearer!

Yes, I was in love. For the first time in my life I was spinning helplessly in that whirlpool of joys and jealousies, of hopes and of heart-qualms that is called love. I was in love with the *poa-poa* bearer, a woman more beautiful than my fondest daydream, than any dream! Picture every perfection of physical attraction combined in one full-blown willowy form and you can not, even then, visualize the wondrously beautiful woman who had greeted me upon my entrance into the Jallan Batoe!

Yet I knew, quite as soon as I felt the first fluttering of love, that mine was neither an ordinary love affair nor an ordinary situation for a love affair. Altogether it was a paradoxical case. She had my heart and mind in her power by her wondrous womanly charms; she had my body and life in her power by her apparent leadership of the Poonan, now my hosts, but any time, it might prove, my captors.

I did not stop to consider that. I did not stop to consider that I needed a sober head, a selfish heart, a steady, sure hand to win to the Green, Green God—and civilization. I did not stop even to consider her different race, her undoubtedly exalted position among the Pocnan, her eye-dazzling beauty. I considered nothing, nothing, I tell you, save and except that I loved her!

Desire cankered my heart. I was mad with desire. I desired her more even than I desired the Green, Green God!

All that morn I searched the lovely face of each woman in that tireless throng. One glimpse of my *poa-poa* bearer, and I felt the desire that cankered my heart would be soothed, assuaged. I searched till my eyeballs fairly ached in their sockets. She was not among them. All morning, through shriveling noon—and she did not come!

And then, as the tumulting disappointment in my heart was growing apace with the constant arrival of more beautiful women, with the increasing blasting heat of the early afternoon, the Golden Women close about me fell back to give passage to a woman whose long rainbow-tinted train of peacock-feather gown was upheld by female attendants, and whose many baskets of offerings were borne by youngish men.

For a breath—so fine, so exquisitely elegant was that woman—my eyes betrayed me. I thought indeed, for that breath, she was my golden-haired turquoise-eyed *poa-poa* bearer. But no! Her hair was like that of all the other Golden Women—an interwoven jungle of black tresses.

Yet while she was like the other Golden Women, she was unlike them. There was something subtly proud, almost haughty, about the tilt of her nose. That nose, chiseled so sensitively thin it seemed, in the torchlight, almost a transparent olive white, came down in a straight line, without notch, from her low round forehead. It was an imperious nose, just such a nose as that which the Romans loved to carve on the head of Minerva. It gave to the Golden Woman's beauteous face the same prophetic, but imperious and arrogant look, so inseparable from the head of that Roman goddess of wisdom and war.

I can't explain it, really; but somehow she seemed more beautiful, if such could be, than the other women—and they all were beautiful! Yet hers was not an opulent beauty. There was that about her—in her almond-shaped eyes, her imperious nose, in the thin cruelty of her red lips—which bespoke all the delicately constituted beauty of the orient.

Slimmer she was than the *poa-poa* bearer, slim as a palm-tree and quite that upstanding in lofty carriage. Her breasts were not full-blown, not nearly so luxuriant as those of the *poa-poa* bearer; under the clinging outlining gauze of brilliant peacock plumes, her breasts were like awakening tender buds. Still she was no younger than my gentle conductress of the night. Indeed, to judge from her eyes rather than from her softly

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flowering golden torso, she was older, more satiated with life.

In the Orient, you must know, there are just two types of womankind. One type blows rich and luscious, as an orchid putting out overnight, and then shrivels and withers away in the years, as an orchid does in the sun. The other type never blooms to its full and hence never cloys, but goes on through the years, forever giving the lie, in appearance, to those years.

She was of that type, that never-full-blown type—the type of oriental woman ever young. And that is a feline type which sheathes its strength as a cat does her claws. An unwholesome type, always young in limb and torso, but ever, ever old in crafty knowledge, in the light that lies in the eyes.

That light was in her eyes. Brown were her eyes, an even darker brown than were those of the other Golden Women. In the flicker from the innumerable torches her eyes gleamed almost a black, as with the duskiness of a kind of illimitable, unsearchable depth. And they gleamed, those eyes, from between almond-shaped lids which had a slant to them that was not nice to see, that seemed evil!

Evil were the eyes themselves! That was the light in them. Evil and wise and old, with a sort of intuitive cunning, the inscrutableness of the East! They were Chinese eyes, wicked eyes, eyes that gleamed malignantly in the torch-sputterings, as the courtesan Thais's must have gleamed when she looked upon the city she had burned; and eyes, too, that seemed in the sputtering of the torches, to be hazy with stifled passion, just as those of Salome must have been when she craved of Herod the head of John the Baptist.

SHE slipped toward me, did that wickedly beautiful woman, between the Golden Women huddled to either side, her clinging gown of silky, finely woven, polychrome peacock plumes accentuating rather than concealing the slim lines and feline grace of her form. I remember I could hear, as she glided up to me, the jingle of the anklets of gold bangles on her feet; and I even could see flickering beneath the hem of her brilliant gown those small arched golden feet, loosely strapped in *cogon* sandals.

She came quite close to me, her breath fanning my face, her skin, in the torchlight, of an olive tint, flecked with gold glimmers and glowing with a faint rose underneath the soft velvet curve of each cheek. She felt of my hair and looked into my eyes and through and through me with her own evil Chinese eyes.

"*Seek laha wook!*" she murmured in a voice that was a surprise to me—so silky, caressing, almost like a murmurous purr it was: "Hair red as blood! Eyes blue as the sky!"

Her tendrils of fingers enmeshed themselves in my red beard. As if the better to see that beard she tossed back from about her face her jungle of black hair, blue-black and glossy now in the light of the torches, so that it flowed in shiny, snaky undulations from her low round forehead down her back to a point below her waist. Then and all of a sudden she gave that beard a tremendous yank!

CHAPTER IX

TELLS WHY HYDE LEARNED TO FEAR THE HIGH PRIESTESS, LIP-PLAK-TENGGA

A THOUSAND pains tore the skin of my face. (Hyde felt his red halo of beard reminiscently, tenderly!) I leaped afoot off the couch, my mouth jerked open, my jaw sagging, quivering, from the jar of that tremendous yank. I was beside myself with pain, with the shock of a complete, hideous surprise, and with perhaps a certain rage.

"Cripes!" I sputtered in English, lapsing with rage into my mother-tongue and rubbing my thousand-pricked face frantically. "What do you mean! What do you mean by pulling my beard! Don't you believe that beard is mine! You sneaky cat, do you think it's false!"

But low to the flooring before me she was bowing nine times.

"*Arrê!*" she purred in that silky tone. "It *is* the Man-Child of Genghis Khan! It is the Sending of the Sword! *Ahê!*"

I felt like leaping, worn shoes and all, upon her bobbing jungle of hair. I could feel my toes tensing in their shreds of leather. I was beside myself with overmastering rage. But I got a grip on myself. I stood helplessly choking with rage, and watched her.

An ominous doubt went thudding through my aching head. She had pulled my beard intentionally, almost it seemed maliciously.

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Well now, as I watched her, it struck me that there was something like mockery in her purring words, something like a kind of mock gravity in the way she was bowing her black snaky tresses of hair. I began to know fear of that woman.

"She's like a cat, just as I called her in my rage," I said to myself. "She's like a sleek, slinking, beautiful tiger-cat! She's doubtful of me. That I know from that yank on my beard. I'll bet she's here to attempt to wile my secrets out of me!"

Fear lent black wings to my imagination. Maybe she knew already, I thought, that I was not the Man-Child of Genghis Khan, whoever that Man-Child was. Maybe she could see through me, see that I was only Willyum Hyde, an orchid-seeking Englishman. Fear lent me caution. I would keep a firm check on myself, I resolved, and stomach all my curiosity about the Poonan, about who I was supposed to be. I would not let her find me out. I could not afford to let her, of all women, know I was after the Green, Green God!

With a sharp regret for the bold words I had uttered upon my entrance into the Jallan Batoe, and then, upon the heels of that, a hope that she had not been among the women of the night before, I sat me down on the sacred *pehang* skin upon the couch and waited.

The woman rose up with serpentine flexures, after the nine kowtows. She motioned with a commanding sweep of one gold-banded arm, the youngish men carrying her baskets of offerings to draw closer to me.

They did so, opening the rattan-woven *lebets* to display an appetizing feast of succulent pigs' meat and of *kwe-kwe* or cakes, made of yellow jungle maize and smeared temptingly with *ghee*, a sort of luscious oil drawn from butter and clarified by boiling.

The imperiously beautiful woman sidled against me once more, rubbing like a cat so close to me that I could feel, through the thin transparency of her feathery gown, the glowing warmth of her golden-limbed body. Looking down at me out of inscrutable brown eyes, downy now as with the haze of some hot emotion, she purred in Poonan—

"Eat, O Man-Child of Genghis, the Great and Good!" And she lifted her proud head, with a gleam of her eyes, as if the words were a command.

Long had my stomach urged me, with a gnawing insistence, to sample the offering of food; but I had been afraid, for no sound reason, of *ipo-ipo*, some hidden Poonan poison. Now, however, at those words of command, that imperious toss of her head, but more than else, that gleam of her evil eyes, I realized that in order to play out my hand I would have to overcome all fears of poison, and eat. I made to reach down, therefore, for one of the buttered cakes.

But at my action one of her women attendants was before me, offering a cake to me. As I lifted it to my lips, still warmly moist as it was from the oven, an inspirational thought clicked into my brain: Why not learn something of this evil-eyed beauty?

Why not? There could be no harm in that, providing I did it politely, with affected gallantry. And certainly, if I made her talk of herself and her people, she would not then have much opportunity to question me. That was it! I would question her. I would turn the tables on her.

"But," I asked artfully in Poonan, ere I tasted that soft cake, "may I not know to whom I am indebted for this food?"

"To all the Poonan," she said with a haughty nod of her head toward the onlooking men and women.

"But these cakes?" I persevered.

"Oh, to *Lip-Plak-Tengga*—" her thin cruel lips curled slightly in a smile—"to me—Flower of the Silver Star, High Priestess of the Poonan and of the Green, Green God!"

There it was again: the Green, Green God! How I longed to ask her more of that Green, Green God! But I could not. I did not know, but I greatly feared, that she had made that very statement merely to lead me on to ask questions, to show my ignorance of the Poonan; in a word, to betray myself.

I tell you I was quite fearful now of that woman. There was that in the fitful gleamings of her Chinese eyes—something so doubting of me, so sharply, persistingly probing—which belied altogether the silkiness of her tone, the catlike caress of her movements, and made me realize, more and more strongly, that I would do well to keep a tight mouth on myself.

Wherefore, to turn the conversation to something which, so far as I could see, would work my case no injury, and which even more than the Green, Green God, was uppermost at that moment in my mind, I said:

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"But that golden-haired *poa-poa* bearer last night—I thought she had all to do with the Poonan and the Green, Green God?"

"Ah," she assented, "with the Poonan, yes." Then with a disdainful toss of her head and a faint, but vexed knuckling of her low olive brow: "But with the Green, Green God, *nda, nda!* I am the High Priestess of the God, of the Menacing *Mandau* of Genghis Khan, of all the jewels and of the whole sacred Stone *Dobo!* She—" and there was a sort of scornful envy in her silky voice—"well, she is the *Orlok Radenajo* of the Poonan."

"*Orlok?*" I repeated.

I knew that in Malay *radenajo* means the wife of a rajah, of a king; it might mean, in a far-fetched way, an unmarried woman ruler. I hoped that last was so. But I was not sure. *Orlok* was the word that caused the doubt in my mind. It was a word entirely new to me. Never had I met up with it in either the Malay or Dyak language, or any dialect of those languages.

But the High Priestess was speaking.

"Yes," she was saying: "*Orlok Radenajo* of the Poonan. *Orlok* is one of the few words of our fathers' tongue that still lingers with us since our fathers left, in *tempo doelo* (olden times), the Land of Tartary, where the golden rhubarb grows and where the men-children of Genghis Khan still rule the world as the Lords of Lords. To us, as to our fathers, it means marshal of soldiers. And *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa* is the Marshal Queen of the Golden People!"

"*Belun-Mea Poa-Poa?*" I said after her, mouthing the name of my lovely loved one as though it were some delicious morsel, and repeating in that last compound name the Dyak word which means both flame and fire. "How beautiful! Golden Feather of Flame! But—but is she married?"

The Priestess shook her head emphatically and a whit sulkily, I thought. Then as if in haste to divert me from a subject distasteful to her, she said quickly:

"*Nda, nda;* she is not married. No man ever has kissed her. But take some meat, take some meat, Man-Child!" And she motioned one of the youngish men to hand me a pig's foot.

My teeth had no sooner sunk into the soft, juicy meat, however, than I became alive to the fact that it was saltless, almost tasteless. I looked about. There was no salt, nor any receptacle for salt, to be seen.

"What do you do for salt, *Lip-Plak-Tengga?*" I asked. "I should imagine if you Poonan eat meat daily without the use of salt you would be attacked by all manner of scorbutic complaints—livid spots and all the horrors of scurvy."

She laughed between those cruel lips, a gay rippling laugh.

"*Hung!*" she said sharply to one of her men.

The slit-eyed fellow came toward me, holding a *hung* or stone gourd. I thought, at first, that it contained some concoction of honey or natural wine or other native liquor. It smelled malodorously enough. But when I tasted it I knew it for sulfur water.

"That's the reason," explained the Priestess, "why the Golden Folk are not affected with scurvy, even though year in and year out we never use what you call salt. We grow and use pepper; and we get this sulfur water from a spring in the volcanic rock of the Jallan Batoe."

"I've got it," I smiled. "You make it serve as a makeshift for salt. It's the pound of cure against the ounce of prevention, to twist the adage. And it tastes that badly too!"

She laughed again at my sally. Her lids widened till they lost their evil curve; her brown eyes gleamed almost honestly. Seemingly she had vaulted into a good humor. Seeing that, I broke off to ask a question that, to speak plainly, was bothering me.

"But tell me," I asked: "why doesn't she come to me? Golden Feather of Flame, I mean. I have been anxiously watching for her all day."

Very seriously she looked down at me. She looked down at me from between tight, partly closed lids for a long time, as if indeed she were trying to read my innermost thoughts. Slowly, questioningly, she repeated:

"You—you have been watching for her, and anxiously, all day?"

I nodded with some vehemence.

"O Man-Child of Genghis Khan," she said simply, "you are in love!" Then with an odd, irritating laugh, "yes; in love with our *Orlok Radenajo,* Golden Feather of Flame!"

I bowed my head in dumb assent, but more to hide the warm color suffusing my bearded face. It was surely so. I was in

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love. That supreme passion had come to me at last, unwished-for, unbidden, altogether unexpected. Subtly, deliciously, at my first sight of the *poa-poa* bearer it had entered my heart. And it was coiling tight and tighter about my heartstrings, overwhelming me, choking me with sublime passion. I tell you no mortal woman ever can fill her place in my heart. Even today, after twelve long years, I am passionately, utterly in love with that golden-haired, green-eyed Marshal Queen!

Thinking this—a whirling maelstrom of love-tortured thought—I did not look up again but only down at my big working hands. The High Priestess before me must have taken that as a sign of dismissal. She made to turn away. But with a hand on a blue-ringed feather of her downy gown, I halted her.

"Listen," I said tersely, chancing all. "Why did you yank my beard?"

That question, startling in itself, was the more startling in the abrupt directness with which I put it. That question startled her out of her poise. Her face flamed and paled, flamed and paled, the while she looked down at me narrowly. Then suddenly she drew herself together, drew herself up so that she was as a tower of ivory.

"I thought it was false," she said quite calmly. "I thought yours was a false beard, just like the false beards which my priests wear when they masquerade as old *antus* in the devil-devil dances. I doubted that you were the Man-Child of Genghis Khan. That is why I pulled your beard. I thought you were only an *Orang Mohong*, a white man!"

MY HANDS gripped the rush-fibers of the couch beneath me. I was shocked, speechless. But without pausing, without apparently noticing my dismay she went on speaking, her voice vibrant now with a certain ring of certitude.

"Yes; I thought you were a white man just like all those other footsore and ragged ones who came in here before you and tried to steal the Green, Green God, and were tortured until they died! They came, those white men, in *tempo doelo*. one, two, three, four white men; and one was tall and the others short, but all were black of hair. We thought all white men were black-haired.

"And then you come, and you have red hair, a red beard and blue eyes. *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa* saw your red hair, your red beard, your blue eyes, and therefore and thereupon she proclaimed you the Man-Child we have been told would come. All the Poonan believed you were that Man-Child. But I doubted that you were the Man-Child of Genghis-Khan. I alone doubted. I doubted so much I pulled your beard. Your beard is not false, I know now. It is your own; but then you may have dyed it with some red stain!"

There was a challenge in her last statement. I ignored it. I thought only of those four white men who had preceded me into the Jallan Batoe—Dutchmen, Englishmen, Portuguese or what-not, but each and every one of them a white man like myself. And I thought with a kind of horror of their fate. Their fate might prove a warning and a lesson to me if I could but learn the manner of it. Wherefore, to learn the manner of it I asked a question:

"But those strange white men? What brought them here? What did they do——"

"Do? They did nothing. It was what they tried to do! The first three came, one after the other, and were given food and were treated as honored guests. But one after the other, each in his turn, tried to steal the Green, Green God. I do not know why they tried to steal the god. These *Orang Mohong* seem mad with desire for the god. Their eyes burn with love when they see our women, but when they see our Green, Green God, their eyes burn with a greater love.

"The Green, Green God must have some enormous worth, some mystic potence out in the world of white men; for always, no matter how royally we treated them, those white men tried to steal that god. After the treachery of the first three we trusted them no more. We killed those first three, each in his turn, very suddenly, as they crept to the *Dobo* in the dark night.

"The fourth and last man we tortured—tortured at once, ere ever he saw the god. I was only a child then, but I remember to this day how he screamed and jabbered in some unknown tongue!"

I shivered all over. The High Priestess noted that. She made a wry mouth.

"It is terrible, yes; but why should we talk about it? You are no *Orang Mohong!* You would not steal the god! You are the Man-Child of Genghis Khan!"

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Ah, now we were getting on to a desire! I looked up at her; I looked up at her quite seriously.

"*Lip-Plak-Tengga*," I said slowly, earnestly, "why—why in the world do you call me the Man-Ch——"

I stopped. Her wicked Chinese eyes stopped me. There was in those eyes then and of a sudden a blazing triumphant look. It was as if, inwardly and already, she were rejoicing over leading me to disclose myself. I was sure, right then, she still doubted me; and right then I changed my words, saying:

"Why in the world do you call yourselves the Golden People? How is it your skins are so fair, in all this sun, with just the glint of gold?"

As one closes one's eyes under the pain of a headache, so the evil curve of her lids drooped over her eyes; and two little vertical wrinkles of annoyance, at the simplicity, the sheer harmlessness of my question, appeared above her imperious nose. But she kept control of her disappointment, otherwise, remarkably well. The lids slanted open, but the eyes between once more were inscrutable.

"Oh," she exclaimed, with affected carelessness, "that is because we dwell in these caves in the stones, hidden from the hot rays. Our skin is not burned brown by the Bornean sun but is, as you see, of a fair yellowish tinge, like the sheen of gold. The color of the skin marks certain prescribed estates among us, and there are several estates. Golden Feather of Flame is of the supreme estate—that of the rulers, the *Orlok Radenajos*—and her skin, as you must have seen, is white as cream, save for a slight shading of gold. I am of the next estate, the Priestesses. The higher caste a woman is in birth and riches, the more we stay in the caves hidden from the sun, so as to make and keep our skin a light golden hue."

I jumped to a conclusion. As with the Chinese women and their mutilated little feet, I thought, so with these women of the Poonan; they had to suffer the darkness of the caves in order to etiolate their skin as fair as the ordained hue of their caste.

No doubt, my mind went on, that was the very reason why the golden-haired Marshal Queen could not come to me. She could not chance burning and browning her creamy skin by walking under the blistering rays of the mid-afternoon sun.

"But when will I see her?" I asked; then at the Priestess' quizzical, surprised lift of the eyelids, I added: "I mean, of course, your Queen, Golden Feather of Flame! When will I see her in her white, white gown?"

Her lids curved into slits of wickedness; her eyes gleamed maliciously.

"White, white gown?" she repeated. "And you don't know what white means to us? O Man-Child of Genghis Khan, with the Poonan as with our Tartar fathers, white is ever the sign of mourning!"

"Mourning!"

"*Ahe!*" she nodded. "When we heard you coming along the lava path, Golden Feather of Flame dressed in mourning and met you with a *tambatong poa-poa* in her hand, to drive you away as a bad *antu*, a white man. And even now, because of your coming—you with the red hair and blue eyes—*Belun-Mea Poa-Poa* is mourning in the Glowing *Dobo!* But you shall see her soon enough, O Man-Child of Genghis! *Ahe!* Soon enough!"

With those words, so like a veiled threat, and an exasperating little laugh, she backed away, bowing low nine times with a kind of mock gravity. Then to a jingling accompaniment from her gold anklet-bangles which sounded like a teasing echo of her laughter, she disappeared through the niche of doorway.

I sat upon the sacred *pehang* skin, cross-legged and stunned. Over and over again one thought kept hurtling through my brains.

"Golden Feather of Flame mourning because of my coming! But why? What have I done? Come to think of it, there was terror in her voice last night when she discovered that my hair was red, my eyes blue! Can it be—can it be there is some hidden reason to fear me? Or is it that she fears that Sending of the Sword they all speak of?"

I did not know. I hardly knew whether to believe Flower of the Silver Star or not. But one thing I did know: There was every good reason for me to be wary of that evil-eyed High Priestess.

"She doubts me," I muttered. "Of all the Poonan, she alone doubts me. The Poonan do not know there are red-haired white men out in the world, because it so happened that of the four white men who came before me all were black-haired. Of

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course in the white race there are not so many red-haired men as there are black-haired men—the ratio is about six dark men to every one blonde—but it was inevitable that, sooner or later, a red-haired white man should enter the Jallan Batoe.

"I am that inevitable red-haired white man. Therefore, because I am red-haired and because I am almost as tropics-saffroned as the Poonan themselves, the Poonan do not think I am a white man. They think I am that red-haired, blue-eyed man whose coming for some mysterious reason they seem to have been awaiting. They stand in awe of me. They reverence me. They believe I am the Man-Child of Genghis Khan, whoever that Man-Child is.

"But how long, how long, before the Poonan will discover their mistake, awake to the truth? How long before they will do to me what they did to those other four white men? Already *Lip-Plak-Tengga* doubts me. Already she thinks that I am a white man and that I am after the Green, Green God!"

CHAPTER X

IN WHICH WONDER PILES UPON WONDER'S HEAD, UNTIL I HEAR OF THAT GREATEST WONDER OF ALL—THE STONE *DOBO*

I WAS alone. The lessening of the heat wave that had shriveled me through the day told me, even in the continual torch-flickering half-dark of my cave, that sunset was approaching. And a sound in the air, the sound of regular, though naked footfalls, told me further that some one was coming up either stairway of the Elephant Stone.

I got off the couch straightway, stretched my legs, cramped and lifeless as they were from squatting upon them throughout most of the day, and strode out, blinking my eyes into the bright but empty horseshoe-shaped corridor. Whereupon I realized from whom that sound of flapping footfalls came. It was the guard of honor who had left off patrolling before the foot of each flight of nine stairs. As at signal, simultaneously, they appeared—two short-muscled, yellowish-skinned, slit-eyed men—in either gaping arched entrance.

With heads thrown back, they stood rigidly for a space looking up at the rim of the crater far, far above. The last segment of that flaming ball of sun must have dipped out of sight as they looked, behind that ragged rim; for of a sudden, like the boom of a sunset gun, the butts of their *sumpitans* rang echoingly upon the stone flooring.

They swiveled. They faced me.

"O *Mopeng-Lon* of Genghis, *Toewan Baik*," rumbled, with a deep bow, the man at the farther entrance, the entrance on the right-hand side toward the Stone *Dobo:* "O Man-Child of Genghis, the Great and Good—*keha;* come!"

It was a command, if a deferential command.

"But whither?" I debated with myself. "Which way will you two lead me—out of the Jallan Batoe to get lost and die on its jungled slopes, or farther into the maze of monster stones? And if farther into that maze, why, where, for what? What's awaiting me anyhow?"

The guard standing at the entrance by which I first had come into the cave, at that moment came marching toward me, marching slowly, his long *sumpitan* over his left shoulder, his *mandau* drawn from the *jawat* and poised in his right hand, the thick, blunt concave back pressed against his nose as in a kind of salute of respect, of reverence.

I understood then. I was supposed to follow the other guard, the guard at the farther entrance—the entrance toward the Stone *Dobo*. That was it; I debated no longer. For they were leading me, I comprehended in a flash, toward that self-same Stone *Dobo!*

I turned. With one squat guard before and one behind, and me, like a king in state, towering in the center, we left that Elephant Stone.

It took us only a trice of time to get out of that Elephant Stone; yet in that trice of time, tropic night had swooped down swiftly and suddenly like some black hawk out of the sky. About me, as on the previous night, once again all was blackness, a solid inky blackness, more solid and more inky where the huge stones bulked.

With one guard behind and one before, as I said, we went down that broad grassy avenue between the feathery black dusters of palms and the blacker shapes of the stones. We were making, I had no doubt now, for the Stone *Dobo*, that largest stone of all on the border of the *Danau*—a gleaming, dazzling white in all that blackness. To me, so far away it was, that stone looked

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like a hideously fanciful shape, half human, half animal, like and yet unlike the Sphinx —a gigantic gargoyle glowing with a weird white light against that black drop of swamp.

The wave of heat which had held through the day had lessened preceptibly; the early evening air was almost chill. I could feel that chill. I shivered. But I shivered not only with that chill. I shivered more because of a state of mind, of my whole being.

This business of being under guard, even though it was a guard of honor, of marching through thick blackness in grim silence between stones that bulked up like black beasts on either side of me and between palms, nearer at hand, the feathery plumes of which draggled motionless, black and dead, and all toward a monster rock that glowed weirdly, uncannily, was getting my nerves. I tell you, with all that I had gone through and still was going through, but especially the terrible uncertainty of it all, my nerves were frayed into threads dangling from my framework, live and raw!

Well now, with an abruptness that alone would have alarmed me—had I not also thought that it came only in the chill hours before dawn—rose in the pitchy blackness that monstrous singing of the stones. In a jiffy, all about me was sound, startling, shattering sound.

The sun-dried fronds of the palms on either hand waved, as in a wind, and rubbed against one another with grating sounds until they resembled nothing so much as gallows-trees, weighed and crackling with bones. Farther back those black beasts of stones vibrated and actually seemed to move with the hum. In all that blackness the whole night boomed like a great hollow drum.

I stopped dead in my tracks. Like a chill wind that hum swept through my body and set every dangling nerve on my framework dancing and tingling like a toothache. I was beside myself with sickening fear. I swung on the guard behind.

"I won't go on!" I shouted in Poonan. "I won't go on, beneath that awful overtone of sound, between those shaking stones, those grating gallows-trees of palms! I heard it last night—all through the dawn. I never expected it now. I thought it was only before dawn. I won't go on till I know! When does that awful hum come? For *Deewa's* sake, tell me when it comes!"

The guard behind bowed low to the grass —I could see him bow, despite the blackness, he was so close to me. He lifted again the concave back of his sword against his nose.

"O Man-Child of Genghis, the Great and Good!" he shouted to make himself heard. "Be at peace! In the chill of dawn, and the short chill of eventide only, do the Souls of Men Who Would-Have-Been wail out in this awful song their misery at their fate. It is soon over. *Li-liat;* look!" And with his sword he pointed above.

Far, far above, within the vast roundness of the crater's rim, appeared almost as I looked upward, a single silver star. And as I looked down again the air of the Jallan Batoe seemed somehow, if faintly, to warm. The awful singing of the stones sobbed and sobbed away into silence.

Everything became in a trice just as before—solid inky blackness, the feathery plumes of the palms draggling black and dead, the whole Jallan Batoe still as solemnity.

In a fulness of wonder, as if it alone had caused all that sudden change, I looked up again at that solitary silver star dipping and sailing and vanishing for breathing intervals behind wisps of clouds that were like fine white laces. Then I turned away.

"*Baik,*" I said. "It is good." And with one guard before and one behind I walked on and on down that velvety avenue.

And now in that solemn stillness breathing ghostily into my ears, I became aware of the slow beating of tomtoms and of the drone of many singsonging voices. Out of the black vault of night seemed to come that eery drone. It rose and fell and hung for nervous moments on certain odd notes. It was like some death chant, weird and unearthly.

I looked ahead. I looked ahead, and there, not so far away, I saw that white glowing monster stone. White it was as the finest marble from Carrara or Jaipur. Yet it was not made of marble. It was made of some mineral, some rare mineral, white as frosted ice, the name, constitution, or geological era of which I have been unable to discover. But I have two good guesses. It was either some *tengga boentoet,* or tail of the star, as the Dyaks call meteoric stones, chuted down from blazing comets, or it was some carboniferous formation laid down in the Paleozoic Age and

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spat to the surface from the hot core of the earth, some time during the active life of the now extinct volcano.

As we drew nearer it struck me that that monster stone seemed luminous as a star, with a glow in the very white substance of it. Then I saw that that glow was not in the rock itself, but came from a series of slits or slim apertures in the rock. Every one of those slits glowed, as if behind, in the heart of that stone, a thousand torches flamed and smoked.

There was the reason for the uncanny brightness of that stone in all the darkness. Like white fingers the light from those thousand torches shot through the slits, reflected on the whiteness of the stone and thus illuminated the blackness all about. And just as that light shot through those slits, just so did that death-chant seem to wail through those slits from the very heart of the stone.

"Surely from the heart of it!" I surmised. "That heart is a cave-temple—the Stone *Dobo*, even as my green-eyed Marshal Queen said!"

But it was more even than that. As we drew yet near and nearer and the glow from within reflected on the whiteness of that monster stone so that it lighted our faces and brightened the blackness, the palms, the stones, the *Danau*—everything adjacent to it—I saw that it was indeed a wonder of the world!

That monster mass of stone was carved, wondrously carved, like a sphinx, with the body of an animal and the face and marble breasts of a beautiful woman. Only there was a difference. Instead of the body of a lion, as in the Sphinx, this animal body, outlined from the immense stone in high relief, was that of a flowing-maned, upstanding horse!

"A horse!" I could not help exclaiming. "That is strange for Borneo! A horse is a European animal, though it originally came from Central Asia. But a horse up here in the very entrails of Borneo, in the fastness of this isolated crater! Why, I thought such an animal would be as strange to these Poonan as horses were to the Aztecs of Montezuma when Cortez and his adventurers came to Mexico like centaurs out of the sea!"

Now, in that monster block of stone between the outlines of the forefeet of the half horse, half woman, was a deep vast doorway of rectangular shape, wider than it was high, with nine pillars set in on either side, upholding the cope of the doorway and carved bodily out of the white block.

Leading up to that great doorway were many, many flights of stairs. They were spaced nine stairs to a flight, with a deep flat landing between each flight. A hundred men could stand side by side along the width of any one of those stairs; a thousand, I'll wager, on any landing. Carved out of the white block of stone, those stairs were as broad and deep and altogether as spacious as a cathedral stairs. The whole white block of stone was a wonderful, preterhuman example of carving.

I whistled my awe.

"Thunder!" I said. "This is no chance work of nature. No; they've carved this magnificent Stone *Dobo* out of the glowing rock! They're like the Egyptians, these Poonan. They've carved all these huge stones and the huge caves in the stones!"

With one guard in front and one following closely I mounted those nine flights of stairs to the increasing sound of the tomtoms and the singsong.

I thought I never would reach the top. I bent down once, I remember, and felt the stone of a stair. It was neither warm nor cold, yet it was nearly as slippery as ice. I saw then that those stairs had been worn so smooth by the knees of a multitude of worshipers!

At last, we stood between the pillars that, nine on either side, upheld the heavy cope of the deep doorway. Before us was a great door divided into two parts, and from behind that double door seemed to come the death-chant. But that double door held my eyes. It was made of *narra*, a stout species of fine mahogany. It was paneled, and each panel was carved with many designs, like an old Spanish cathedral door. In the glow from the white pillars and the white stone of the deep doorway I could make out those designs. They were all of men; men in armor of buffalo hides and steel and silver and gold; men armed with curving *mandaus*, leaden maces, longbows and arrows, shields and tomtoms, and slender *tocmbas* or lances; men close-grouped in nine hordes—a multitude of men—and all, all mounted on horses!

"It's intentional," I thought. "This repetition of the figures of horses is intentional. And the carving of this monster glowing

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Stone *Dobo* into a cross between a sphinx and centaur, into an effigy half woman, half horse, is no haphazard flight of mythology or imagination. It, also, is intentional. Some time back in the bleak beginnings of the world these Poonan have had much to do with horses!"

Then, like a blow in the face, the truth smote me. The High Priestess, Flower of the Silver Star, had said the Poonan had come hundreds of years before from "the Land of Tartary, where the golden rhubarb grows!" Invariably, they all called me "the Man-Child of Genghis Khan!" That explained the horses. They were Tartars—descendants from the finest horsemen who ever lived, who ate and slept and fought on horses and who, on horses, under the leadership of Genghis and Kublai Khan, had swept the round world like a red scourge.

They were descendants from the Tartars of that very period of which Ser Marco Polo, the Venetian, wrote so well. I remembered, in a vivid flash, my Polo of schooldays, and all its wonderful, voluminous notes.

I looked again at those designs. Surely enough, here was final, conclusive evidence as to the Tartar ancestry of the Poonan. Behind each sword and shield armed warrior on horseback, I saw in the designs, just as is told of in Messer Marco's book, a foot-soldier armed with bow and arrows and long lance, and mounted on the crupper!

But another feature had struck me. That was the constant recurrence of the number nine. Remember there had been nine stairs leading up to the corridor in the Elephant Stone, and here in the Stone *Dobo* there were nine flights of stairs, nine steps to a flight. There were nine slim pillars on either side of the deep doorway. And now, in my wonder, I noted that each half of the double door was paneled with panels, immense and designed, and nine in number!

"It's a *tambatong!*" I guessed. "It's a good-luck charm to drive away *antus*, or bad spirits, just as that *damar* torch was a *tambatong* to drive me out of the Jallan Batoe. But it's more than that. I've read that among the Tartars the repeating nine times of anything serves to show respect or authority or position in a great degree. Come to think of it, these Poonan always bow nine times to me. That's a sign, I take it, full of respect, of mystical awe of my position among them, whatever that position really is."

But nine times nine of anything, as in the number of those stairs, was evidence of the greatest, most superlative form of respect, of awe, of exalted position. That was it! That Stone *Dobo* was the supreme temple, the sublime Holy of Holies of the Poonan!

And I was soon to enter the sublimity of that Holy of Holies.

Hanging from either half of the double door were hoops of solid gold, like old-fashioned door-knockers. Well now, of a sudden, my guards put their hands upon those golden hoops and heaved mightily.

The double door divided with a reluctant jerk in the center; and then slowly—never so slowly, it seemed to me—slid back to either side. A volume of sound smote my ears. It was the slow, dull beating of tom-toms, the monotonous weird drone of many singsonging voices. I looked within.

CHAPTER XI

HOW HYDE CAME TO SEE TREASURE, GORGEOUS AND PRODIGIOUS, AND FOUND THAT WHICH IS THE AWE OF MAN

I LOOKED within; but for a while, such was the glare in my eyes, I could see nothing. Torches flickered everywhere like a myriad of candles, and their light reflected from the white walls in a snowy glare. Then I found myself looking into a cavern—a columnated cave-temple, vast as St. Peter's in Rome!

Before me on the flooring knelt a host of women—women with backs bent and immovable, and robed in the dull gleam of golden and silver pheasant feathers and the polychrome plumage of the peacock. It was like that picture of Solomon's numerous wives which one used to see in old Scripture illustrations.

Those backs and bent backs were as countless as the sands on the shore, and as sparkling with colors. They stretched away and away, around and beyond the far pillars into the remotest recesses of the cave-temple, until I thought, for a breath, that I must be looking upon all the women of Asia that ever had been—aye, that ever would be!

But in all that vast sea of bent backs I could glimpse no white, white egret gown; I could glimpse no head bowed under a

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weight of raw gold hair. In that stupendous assemblage, every last woman's hair was black—blue-black under the glare of the glowing cavern. It was like an anti-climax in the chain of wonders.

Really, my heart sank. Among all those women and Golden Women, there was no sight nor sign of my golden-haired, greenish-eyed Marshal Queen!

Yet, in searching for her, I discovered a certain fact. I saw, in a perfect stream that stretched around the far-flung walls of the cave-temple, a double line of men. They were the Poonan, bowed of head, their bodies arrayed, besides the *jawat*, in the rare sleek skins of panthers and *kijangs* and *plandok*, and other beautiful specimens of antelope and deer.

But they were not armed! Dangling from the lax fingers of the short men standing in the row against the walls were brass cymbals, *cogon* whistles, horn conchs and bamboo flutes. Slowly, monotonously, the even shorter men in the front row were beating tomtoms.

Now for the very first time, I realized that to all this foregathering of men and of women, some ceremony was attached. And from that slow funereal beat of the tomtoms, the wail of the death-chant, but particularly from that lack of arms on the squat men, I felt it must be some great and awful rite.

Born of nameless dread, thoughts fluttered and flickered in reeling succession through my overwrought brain. I thought of the *Orang Benua*, and how those abysmal head-hunters had never dared to break the sanctuary of the sacred Jallan Batoe by attempting to enter its crater. I thought of my three Christian Dyak boys who would not budge a foot up the volcano slope. I thought of the sea Dyaks who, though miles, miles away, feared to breathe the name of the sacred Jallan Batoe without making afterward a mystic sign of awe, as did the Hebrews of old in referring to Jehovah!

Tales leaped vividly into my mind; tales I had heard on the shingle beaches and deep in the rotting jungles. All were tales of that dread power of the Poonan, so like the mysterious power of the Thibetans on the top of the world; tales of men and men—white men, insane men, as Fitz said—who had braved, with the boldness of their race, the dangers of the sacred Jallan Batoe, but men and men who never had returned to tell *their tale!* And the very words of the High Priestess, during my talk with her, had verified in a certain degree the truth and horror of these tales!

"God!" I exclaimed. "Can it be—can it be these Poonan have kowtowed to me and adored me almost as a god, only to pull me down the farther, only to make my fall the more terrible? And this ceremony—can it be some titanic torture, mysterious, horrible, hideous and revolting!"

I spoke between dry lips. Well, just as I did, from either hand of the wide doorway two Golden Men stepped forth and approached me. One was an old, old man, with a flowing mane of white hair just like that of the half horse, half woman of the Stone *Dobo* itself. Drooping over the corners of his mouth in separate long white hairs was a Tartar mustache.

The other was a younger man, with a bristle of black hair all over his heavy-jawed face. He was squat and muscled as a pugilist. Indeed he looked, with his muscles rippling as he stalked toward me, just like Gunner Brydges, the British navy middleweight champion, whom I saw go twenty rounds in Rushcutters' Bay Stadium down in Sydney.

Across their golden right shoulders and flapping down to the tops of the *jawats* over their loins, each wore a broad strip of sacred *pehang* skin, brindled yellow and black, like a tabby-cat's fur. The other men in the cave-temple were garbed, I had noticed, not in the skin of the sacred black-spotted leopard, but in the lesser skins of antelopes and panthers, and such ferine animals as occasionally prowled in through the tunnel. Because of those sacred *pehang* strips, therefore, I had an idea.

"I'll wager," I muttered to myself, "that these two Golden Men are some kind of *Adjies* or inferior chieftains of the Poonan!"

Ere I had a chance to fear them, especially the muscled one who looked like Gunner Brydges, they stood before me and bowed their heads to the white flooring of the doorway. The slow tomtoming of the men, the death-wail of all those women, sobbed softly away. The whole immense cavern of the *Dobo* became sealed with a silence like that of the tomb, a silence, just like that of the tomb, which seemed to breathe of the secrets of another world, a world gone and buried in an infinity of time.

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In that entombing silence, so magic with the whispers of oblivion, the old fellow separated the whiteness of his hair from the whiteness of the flooring. He looked up at me out of slits of eyes that glowed like black coals.

"O *Mopeng-Lon* of Genghis, *Toewan Baikl*" His voice quavered with age through the stirless air: "O Man-Child of Genghis, the Great and Good! You who have crossed the vast *laut* (sea) as our fathers did before us; you who have come to us from the *Negorei* (country) of Tartary where the *plandok* is without horns and bears behind its navel a sweet smell! (The musk-deer of Thibet.) *Kehâ;* come! Come with the two *Adjies* of the Poonan, and sit upon the great *Tojout-Plo-Sie* Throne of the Tartar Khanate! Long, long has that Sublime Nine-Times-Nine Throne been occupied by *Mopeng-Led*—Women-Children of the Great Genghis; but never by *Mopeng-Lon* of Genghis Khan, since Yeh-Lu Apushka obeyed the Sending of the *Mandaul Kehâ;* come!"

The Gunner and *Mohong Wook*—or White Hair, as I called that weazened old chief—wheeled then and began walking into the cavern under the white cope of the deep doorway. With them so obviously leading the way, there seemed nothing for me to do but to follow. Leaving the two guards who had brought me from the Elephant Cave, I stepped through the doorway.

At the end of the doorway the two chieftains continued on, straight toward the front of the vast cavern. I followed after. The way was now along an aisle, hedged on either hand by those kneeling rows of women. I sensed a kind of reverence in the bowed attitude of all those lovely women. It was as if my passage so close to those women were as a benediction to them.

With a sudden accession of pride, therefore, I straightened my over-six-feet of body, threw back my red head, and towering above all those kneeling, bent-backed women, walked on down that aisle with something of the boldness I had displayed when first I had walked into the Jallan Batoe.

Thus for a couple of hundred paces. Then the front of the cave-temple, as I drew near, began to take definite shape. I saw, elevated high by nine stone steps above the rest of the flooring, a monstrous large dais that was railed off by a balustrade carved bodily out of the living white stone.

At either side of that enclosed dais, tapestried by rare interwoven feathers, glorious in color and enriched with embroideries of gold and silver thread, were two apartments like the sacristies in certain Christian churches. Between those two sacristies was a great space, glowing with the whiteness of the stone and wavingly pillared with the red balls and the smoke columns of a multitude of torches.

My eyes, as I drew nearer, quickly focused themselves to see in all that glare of stone and the light from those myriad torches. Then I seemed to make out nine *narra kliaus*, or mahogany shields, raised aloft like high altars. I made out nine high shields, I say; then I stopped dead. On each of those nine high shields I saw treasure—treasure such as, in all my life, I never had expected to see—treasure incalculable and fabulous and terrible!

The subterranean vaults of the Dalai Lhama of Thibet, the treasures of the Third Inner City of Pekin, the wealth of all the Moguls of Delhi, all the jewels of the Siamese in Kang Nai—none, not one of these, was anything to compare with this!

Crystals there were, flawless, and of congealed marvelous lights; beryls unshaped by man, huge as eggs, and glowing miles deep in that snowy glare, like sun-lighted pools; imperishable stones of rainbow tints and blends; chalcedony and chrysoprase of carnelian and aqua-marine, agate and green jasper and lapis lazuli; gems cut and set, uncut and unmounted: rubies, emeralds, garnets, diamonds, amethysts, sapphires, jade and pearls—a glittering, staggering hodgepodge of wealth! It was the age-old treasury of Borneo!

Before all that prodigal wealth and all that riot of color, my eyes swam and my brains dizzied in their brainpan. Then I saw that all that opulence was laid out on the mahogany shields, which were mounted after the fashion of tables, each on nine carven stalagmites, projecting like white arms from the elevated flooring, and set about each by nine balls of red fire glowing in as many inverted gold gongs.

Those shields formed a lofty semicircle back from the white stone balustrade. They were nine in number, as I said. Six of them, three on either side, were heaped up with the treasure. From that reeling panorama

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of jungle tints, my eyes now picked out certain of the treasure. There were jeweled effigies of fishes, with red eyes of rubies; there were infinitesimal bells, with tiny pearls for tongues; and there were crescents and moons and suns, with disks and rays of gold that blinded me with their settings of peacock-colored gems.

Lying flat upon a seventh *kliau* was a *mandau* or head-hunter—a great massive sword, concave on one side and convex on the other, for all the world like a Malay *kris*, save that it had but one cutting edge. Its fine-tempered steel glinted coldly in all that light, and its concave back shone warm with a thick inlay of solid gold. But the hilt! Made of ivory it was, ribbed with wires of gold, and set thick with diamonds and rubies and emeralds and pearls!

It was the *Mandau* of Genghis Khan—thus I supposed and correctly—the Menacing *Mandau* of Genghis Khan! How it ever had come to the Glowing *Dobo*, why it had been christened that name of threatening evil, I did not know. But from all I had heard, I did know, for a certainty, that the Poonan feared it. To it was attached some solemn awful service which they called the Sending of the Sword!

But the next *kliau*. It was the center one, farthest back from the white stone balustrade. It was the largest shield of all. It was bare of all heaped-up treasure. That was a distinct relief to my eyes.

Yet it was not entirely bare of all treasure. It was ornamented, not as the Tring Dyaks and Long Wai and Ukits and other tribes of wild head-hunters ornament their shields —with tufts of human hair; but it was enchased thickly with embroideries and arabesques of precious imperishable gems. Indeed, so thickly was it scrolled and figured and ingeniously designed with gems—with fanciful and real shapes of men and animals formed from stones of polished turquoise and red, red rubies, and with flowers and foliage and ferns fashioned out of beryls of violet-blue and amber and crude dripping green—that I believe, to this day, it would be impenetrable proof against bullets!

But that huge shield was not placed upon its nine white arms of stalagmites in the same manner as the others—that is, with convex face to the raised flooring, the slight depression of inner side ready to hold, like a saucer, a heap of jewels. No; the face of that shield—an involved, impenetrable mosaic of sparkling stones, as I said, longer than it was wide and swelling like the half of a football in a round curve to its center—that face was turned up to the glowing ceilings of the altar space.

Wherefore I reasoned, quite naturally, that it was not meant, like the others, to uphold treasure. It was meant to uphold men. It was meant to uphold *me!* From the words of old *Mohong Wook*, I believed I was supposed to sit upon it. That large *kliau*, so inwrought with gems, was the upraised Sublime Nine-Times-Nine Throne of the Tartar Khanate!

I started toward it in the wake of old *Mohong* and the Gunner, now awaiting me a short space ahead at the foot of the nine stone stairs. Well, just as I did, my eyes fell upon the last shield of all. It was the one on the left-hand side of that jewel-embellished throne. It was really the eighth shield, as that throne being in the center of the semicircle and to judge from its name, was in all probability counted as the ninth shield.

Anyhow, my eyes fell upon that left-hand *kliau;* and then—then I saw that which I had heard so much about, that which I had come expressly to find, that which I hoped some day to take back with me to the outer world! It took my breath clean away. It was awesome!

A single emerald, man, carved as by a godhand into the life-size form of a shimmering green parrot! The greatest treasure ever dragged or dug from sea or soil! The Green, Green God!

TO BE CONTINUED

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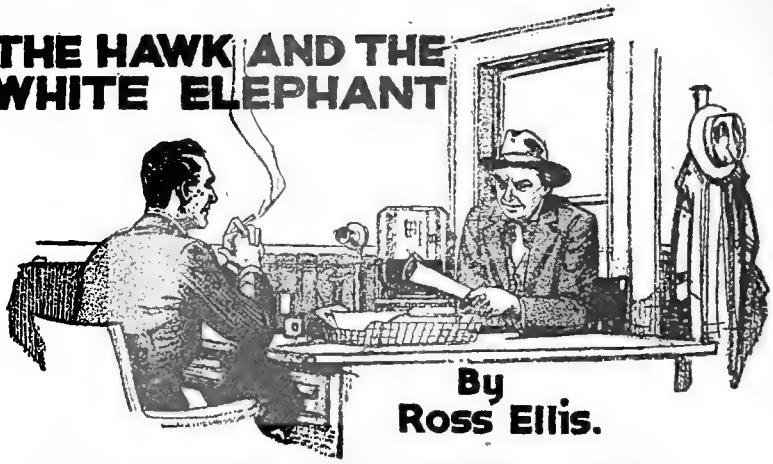
THE HAWK AND THE WHITE ELEPHANT



By Ross Ellis.

Author of "Just Nuts," "The Rolling Stone Goes Moss-Gathering."

OLD GRIFFITH HENDERSHOT, known to the Millville iron trade as the "Hawk," hung the telephone receiver on the hook with a hand that trembled slightly; but it was eagerness, not age, that had set his nerves aquiver.

Except for a predatory beak of a nose and eyes of a peculiarly piercing quality, Hawk Hendershot bore little resemblance to his feathered namesake. His hair was long and silver-tinged, his voice was soft and his manner benignant. Many, to their lasting sorrow, had been deceived thereby.

Of late the Hendershot Pig Iron Agency had fallen on evil days. The pickings had diminished to the vanishing point. Foundrymen, it seemed to the old broker, had become entirely too well educated. Most of his former customers, realizing the true inwardness of past transactions, had crossed his name off their inquiry lists.

Being well fortified financially as a result of thirty years of sharp trading, The Hawk had about decided to retire. But the awkwardly worded message which had just come to him over the 'phone had caused him to doubt that the game was played out, after all.

He puckered his thin lips and emitted the shrill whistle which served him in lieu of a call-bell.

The rattle of a typewriter in the adjoining room suddenly ceased, and a rat-faced, gray little man appeared in the doorway of the private office. It was Lemuel Heevy, stenographer, bookkeeper, salesman, assistant manager and office boy of the Hendershot Pig Iron Agency.

"Lemuel," demanded his employer, "tell me all about the Millville Steel Foundry."

In addition to his other invaluable qualities, little Heevy had an inquiring disposition and an encyclopedic memory. He could be trusted to supply a complete record of any prospective victim.

He scratched his grizzled head and spat reflectively.

"Built in 1895 by Jerry Bannon. Busted in 1901. Idle for two years. Bannon raised some money and started the plant going again in 1904. He died in 1907; plant idle ever since—at least, up to a week ago."

"And a week ago—" prompted The Hawk.

"A week ago young Jerry Bannon, the old man's son, came back from Texas, where he has been living with an uncle since his father's death. They say he has about fifty thousand dollars that he made in some lucky land deals when the oil boom struck his section. Anyhow, he's paid off his father's debts, taken over the plant from the mortgagee, and says he's going to start her up again. I saw him down at the bank a couple of days ago. Just a big, raw, red-headed kid. The cashier introduced us. Bannon says he doesn't know the first thing about the foundry business; but that he made his money in a game he learned while playing it, and he guessed he can learn this one."

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The Hawk's eyes gleamed as might those of a veritable bird of prey at the sight of live meat.

"Experience is a great teacher," he agreed. "Mr. Bannon might as well get his now as later. He has just told me over the 'phone that he is ready to buy some pig iron."

"We haven't any steel-making iron to sell him," objected Heevy. "Not one of those furnaces will allow us a broker's commission."

"Bannon doesn't appear to know that it requires a special kind of iron to make steel," said Hendershot. "From the way he talked just now I judge he thinks all pig iron is about alike."

"But Con Hefferan, his father's old foundry boss, is working for him. Hefferan will put him wise."

"Hefferan is out of town rounding up a crew of molders. He asked Bannon to pick up a few cars of iron so that they can get the foundry in operation right away." Hendershot stood up, an erect, courtly figure, looking much like the traditional Kentucky colonel. "I shall call on Mr. Bannon at once," he announced.

"And may the Lord have mercy on his soul," said little Heevy piously.

His employer sighed.

"Will you never learn?" he mourned. "Why, Lemuel, I intend to sell Mr. Bannon the finest steel-making iron that money will buy. Furthermore, regardless of what it costs me, I shall sell it to him at far less than the market price."

Heevy laughed so hard that he had to lean against the door casing for support.

"I—I get you," he cackled. "And when —when Bannon's appetite is all whetted up——"

"Why, then," drawled The Hawk, "I may serve him with a small steak carved from Perrigord's 'white elephant'."

Heevy's jaw dropped as the full meaning of the allusion flashed through his brain.

Almost a decade before, the then superintendent of the Perrigord Pig Iron Mfg. Co., 'way down in Tennessee, had gone on a thirty-day drunk. Being a conscientious man, he made a sincere effort to attend to his duties, even while consuming raw mountain whisky at the rate of more than a quart per day. Roaring at the sweating negroes, he kept the single stack going at full capacity.

His zeal for his employer's interests led him to make certain experiments designed to reduce production cost, the details of which he was later unable to remember. The result, however, spoke for itself. When, shaky but sober, he looked over the chemist's analyses of the daily runs, he uttered a shriek of anguish, hastily gathered up his belongings, and his place knew him no more.

He left behind him, stacked on the furnace yard, fifteen hundred tons of iron so uniquely atrocious that even in the boom days of 1906 it could not be sold at any price. The furnace went out of blast, in again, out again. Still that monument to John Barleycorn remained, gathering rust and dust on the furnace yard.

"Good Lord!" ejaculated the little clerk. "You wouldn't dare sell a steel foundry junk like that, would you? Not even a gray-iron foundry could use it. It couldn't be melted into good sash-weights. It's fit only for ballast."

"Has it ever been tried in a steel foundry?"

"Of course it hasn't—nor in a jewelry shop, either."

"That lets us out, then," grinned Hawk Hendershot. "You never can be really sure about a thing until you try it."

Whereupon his lean face assumed its habitually benevolent expression, he settled a wide, black hat on his silvery mane, and started for the office of the Millville Steel Foundry, a gentleman of the old school to the life.

THE new owner of the steel foundry proved to be a freckled, red-haired person, very big and bony, very optimistic and very young. The Hawk judged his age to be about twenty-three years. He seemed much impressed by his caller—in fact, by the whole city of Millville.

"It's such a nice, friendly, honest place," he said with boyish enthusiasm. "I was just a kid when I left here, but it's always been home to me. When I got off the train and the runner for the Manufacturers' Hotel grabbed for my grip I could have hugged him. It seemed like a personal welcome. I made up my mind then and there that I never would leave here again."

"It is well for a young man to become established," agreed Hendershot paternally.

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"Just what I told myself," said the boy. "I came here expecting to spend only a week or so. But, shucks! I liked the smell of the air and I liked the people. I had money enough to buy Dad's old plant and still have something left in the old sock. Why not do it? So I did."

"Very wise, I am sure," beamed The Hawk. "Now, about that pig iron——"

"Why, I'll leave that to you," said Jerry Bannon. "You know what I need better than I do. Con Hefferan said to pick up a couple of carloads as a starter. When he gets back we'll try it out, and if it suits him we'll buy two months' supply—about three hundred tons."

It was so easy that The Hawk felt vaguely disappointed. He really preferred to have his victims put up more of a battle.

"My boy, I must advise you to act at once," he urged. "The iron market is in a critical condition. Today I can offer you an opportunity which tomorrow I may not be able to duplicate. Let me sell you the three hundred tons, the order being subject to your superintendent's approval of the first two cars."

Young Bannon nodded.

"If the price is right, why not?"

"I will make the price eighteen dollars a ton," said The Hawk. "I am giving you a very special bargain."

"It sounds good to me," declared Bannon with enthusiasm. "Hefferan said the iron would cost me twenty dollars a ton. I'll have the laugh on him when he gets back. It certainly is great to be in a place where they don't try to skin a man just because he is green to a business."

Hendershot was already busy with contract forms and a fountain pen.

"In the oil fields," he remarked without pausing in his labors, "there are, no doubt, many unscrupulous men. You must be a very shrewd young man, Mr. Bannon, to have avoided being defrauded."

"I can take care of myself," boasted the boy. "Nobody yet ever handed me a lime without getting a lemon in return."

Hendershot placed the contract forms on Bannon's side of the battered oak table.

"Look them over," he invited. "I think you will find them sufficiently explicit to cover the situation."

The cock-sure young man gave them a perfunctory glance.

"Sure," he said, and signed his name with a flourish.

"And look at what he signed!" exulted The Hawk, when, on returning to his office he displayed the contract to Lemuel Heevy. "No brand, no guaranteed analysis, no anything! Just pig iron. And after they approve the first two cars and order the rest forward they have no recourse. I can ship them what I please and they have to take it!"

"What do you want me to do?" asked Heevy.

"Pick up two cars of the finest steel-making iron you can find on the market. Get something on track, if you can, so as to save time. In the meantime, I'll go over to Major Perrigord's office and see what price I can get on three hundred tons of the celebrated 'white elephant.' He ought to pay me for taking it off his hands."

II

IT WAS the policy of old Hawk Hendershot never to trouble trouble until trouble had him backed up in a corner; but he was strong on the defensive. He was certain that sooner or later there would be a wail of protest from the Millville Steel Foundry, and he waited for it with perfect equanimity. He had written that contract himself and he knew that it would stand in law. Moreover, he had the money. He had been careful to have all the cars shipped at one time and to collect the full price on presentation of the bills-of-lading. The possibility that the iron might prove satisfactory never entered into his calculations.

Therefore, when he heard Bannon's voice on the wire some weeks later, the old man instantly prepared for war. He was surprised at the affable quality of the other's tone.

"Got any more pig iron like that last lot, Mr. Hendershot?"

"Maybe." At times like these The Hawk was always guarded in his statements.

"I'd like your quotation on a larger quantity—say, eight hundred or a thousand tons."

Hendershot almost dropped the receiver. "You—you're pleased with it, are you?" he finally managed to get out.

"We had considerable difficulty when the second shipment came in," said the

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friendly voice, "because it's somewhat different from the first two cars. But at last we found how to use it. And, say! You couldn't sell us anything else, now."

"I'll see what I can do for you," said The Hawk feebly, and hung up the receiver.

He wanted to think this astonishing situation over. He had all the sensations of the wild-cat promoter whose hole-in-the-ground suddenly develops into a gold mine.

He was dazzled by the glittering possibilities that his imagination pictured. On his last transaction with the steel foundry his profit on the three hundred tons had been over thirty-five hundred dollars. At the same rate this coming sale promised to be the juiciest plum of his career. Perhaps Bannon could be talked into buying more than a thousand tons. The Hawk wondered how much of that iron Perrigord really had on his yards. He consulted the telephone.

Major Perrigord was not in, so that gentleman's office informed the questioner. How much of that iron was still for sale? According to the list, about 1500 tons. Yes, that was after deducting the three hundred tons already sold to Mr. Hendershot. Yes, Major Perrigord might be in at any moment. Business must be picking up. There had been a number of inquiries about the iron that day. Who had inquired? Oh, all the iron brokers. Had any of them talked to the Major? No, the Major had been absent all morning.

The Hawk was puzzled. Knowing nothing of steel manufacture, he had taken it for granted that because the iron was worthless for gray-iron castings it would be worse than worthless for Bannon's purposes. Apparently he had been wrong. He turned again to the telephone.

Would Major Perrigord's office give him an option on that 1500 tons at the same price as the previous lot—six dollars a ton? No, the office regretfully could not. The Major himself was the only one with that authority. Some of the other brokers had asked for options.

"Ask the Major to quote nobody until he hears from me," urged Hendershot.

The office would be glad to do that.

The Hawk did not like this sudden interest in the Perrigord product. It meant that Bannon must have had the iron analyzed and then given the inquiry to the other dealers, all of whom would have recognized the freakish analysis on sight. It meant competition, which, in this instance, spelled the death of trade for the Hendershot Pig Iron Agency.

However, by prompt action he might clinch the business before the others were prepared to quote. Half an hour later his wheezy runabout stopped before the Millville Steel Foundry.

The trials incident to whipping the foundry into shape seemed to have had no effect on Jerry Bannon's spirits. He looked pleased with himself, pleased with life, and pleased to see his visitor.

The Hawk got down to business at once.

"So you liked the iron so much that you have to buy a little more, hey?"

Bannon did not attempt to conceal his enthusiasm.

"My superintendent says he never saw anything like it. The chemist told us we couldn't use it; but you can't fool an old steelmaker like Con Hefferan."

"Got rid of most of that three hundred tons, have you?"

"Don't expect to have a pound of it left, two weeks from now."

It wasn't any false alarm, then. They had actually used the iron and liked it. It seemed to Hendershot that the young foundryman ought to be like wax in his hands.

"Now, let me give you a little advice, my boy," he said in his most paternal manner. "That iron is something special, as I told you before. There are only about fifteen hundred tons to be had at present, and I control it. There will not be any more on the market for a long time. Take it all while you can get it. Give me a firm offer at the same price you paid me for the last lot, and I'll see if I can't get the whole tonnage for you."

Bannon's brow puckered.

"I don't understand. I thought you controlled it."

"I represent the furnace that controls it," lied The Hawk. "The furnace people really fix the price. You give me an offer in writing, and then I'll have something definite to put up to my principals."

The young foundryman slowly shook his head.

"I don't see how I can. I've asked the other iron brokers for a price on the same kind of iron. If one of them came in with a better figure than the offer you want me

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to make you, why, I'd be tied up. It doesn't seem fair. No, Mr. Hendershot, you get your price first. Then we can talk."

There was a finality in the boy's tone that forbade argument. The Hawk wasted no more time. If he could not clinch the buyer, the seller yet remained. His fear lest one of the other brokers might make a snap quotation on the iron was overshadowed by the fear that Major Perrigord would be tempted into giving an option without waiting for him. He knew the Major had little cause to show him special consideration. He remembered, with fleeting regret, a transaction dating back six years, at the conclusion of which Perrigord had announced his intention of some day hanging the Hendershot hide on his back fence. The Major had never referred to the matter again. The Hawk hoped he had forgotten.

The broker hurried into his runabout and stepped on the accelerator. At the first drug store he slipped into a booth and telephoned the Perrigord Company. The Major himself answered the 'phone.

"Yes, sir," he said. "I received your message on my return, and I at once telephoned your office. If you wish to do business with me I'll wait half an hour for you."

Hendershot did not require the half-hour. There were seven miles to be traversed, but he did it in ten minutes flat, almost shaking the hood off his machine, and smashing Millville's speed laws to flinders.

Major Perrigord was a sallow, dyspeptic little man, with military bearing and a drooping black mustache two sizes too large for him. Usually he wore an expression of settled melancholy; but today Hendershot noted that the gloom had lightened. He seemed almost cheerful.

"There has been the most remarkable demand for that iron of mine," he confided. "So far as I know, it is entirely worthless; yet here is the situation. Every iron broker in Millville has telephoned my office today, during my absence, to ask a price on it. Hendershot, that three hundred tons I sold you was the first I ever sold of that freak lot, except for a few sample carloads. What did you have up your sleeve when you bought it? Has some foundryman actually discovered a way in which it can be used?"

Hawk Hendershot permitted himself the unusual luxury of telling the exact truth.

"I bought your iron without guarantee and I sold it the same way. That's all I know. But if you want to give me an option on the balance at the same price I'll try to work it off for you."

The Major shook his head.

"I can't do it. Not with all those inquiries staring me in the face."

The Hawk spread out his hands.

"If you don't protect me, how can I deal with my customer?"

"But these other brokers seem to have customers too," protested Perrigord. "I'll quote you all the same price, subject to prior sale, and let the best man win. That will be fair to everybody."

This did not suit Hendershot at all, and he made no secret of the fact.

"I can't do business that way. Give me an option for twenty-four hours."

"Not twenty-four minutes," said the Major firmly. "I'd be crazy to think of it."

"Not if I make the price seven dollars a ton?"

"Not at any price. You might not make the sale, and in that case I should be the loser."

The Major drew down his black brows in a scowl. It was evident that he was not to be moved from his position.

Hendershot was desperate. Once a price was quoted to the other iron dealers, his chance for big profits was gone. He thought rapidly. He came to a decision.

"Major," he said, "may I use your telephone?"

"Certainly, sir. Step right into the booth."

A MOMENT later The Hawk was in communication with the Millville Steel Foundry.

"This is Griffith Hendershot, Mr. Bannon. My principals think they might authorize a price of eighteen dollars a ton. If I talk them into it, will you give me the order?"

The young foundryman laughed, albeit rather impatiently.

"I won't make you an offer, if that's what you mean. But the other brokers haven't quoted me, and I guess they aren't going to. Get your price and come out to see me. And you might bring contract blanks along. I'll not buy until I hear from you."

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Hendershot left the booth, his mind at rest. His course was now clear. Evidently the others were not venturing to quote until Perrigord had named his price. There was just one way to insure the Major's silence.

"Let's get down to brass tacks. I'll buy your iron outright at seven dollars a ton, which is a lot more than it is worth. Is it a deal?"

The Major looked wistful, but he shook his head.

"I can't consider less than ten dollars," he said.

"That's absurd!" snorted The Hawk. "The iron is a drug on the market. Be reasonable."

"If the price is unreasonable," said Major Perrigord, "I shall, of course, have to reduce it. But perhaps the other brokers will not share your view."

Hendershot almost wept. It was agonizing to see such a percentage of his profit pared away. Still, two-thirds of a loaf was decidedly better than no bread at all.

"I suppose I'll have to pay your holdup figure," he conceded grudgingly. "I'd rather lose money than disappoint my customer."

At the picture of old Hawk Hendershot losing money to accommodate anybody, even the gloomy Major was compelled to smile.

"Am I to understand that you will pay me ten dollars per ton, F. O. B. cars Millville, for fifteen hundred tons of pig iron of the same grade as the last lot I sold you?"

"It's robbery, but I'll do it," agreed the other.

The Major snapped his fingers.

"You have bought something," he said. "Now we come to terms. The sum involved is fifteen thousand dollars. I want your check, sir, for one-half that amount. The balance can go sight-draft against bills-of-lading, as the iron is shipped. Those are my terms to you, Mr. Hendershot."

"That's all right," said The Hawk indifferently. He was so accustomed to having his good faith questioned that it never caused a ripple on the surface of his self-esteem. "We can fix it up tomorrow."

"I have contract-blanks here, and I see your check-book in your pocket. We will close the matter now, if you please."

"I don't see what's the overpowering hurry," grumbled the old broker.

Major Perrigord looked him squarely in the eye.

"If we failed to pass papers here and now," he said sorrowfully. "by tomorrow morning you would remember this transaction merely as an option—if it suited your purpose better. I had one experience with you, sir, that I can never forget."

"Fix up your contract," growled The Hawk, inspecting the stub of his check-book. He wondered if this rise in price was the Major's threatened revenge. It was an edifying thought, in view of his own profit on the deal. Hendershot chuckled as he scrawled his signature to the seven-thousand-five-hundred-dollar check.

III

ACROSS the battered oak table in the office of the Millville Steel Foundry, the iron broker beamed on Jerry Bannon.

"It took great argument with my principals," he said. "They felt that they should have at least twenty dollars a ton. But I fought for your interests, my boy. I maintained that some sacrifice should be made to help along a coming industry like this. Here is the result of my labors."

He laid a contract form on the table.

Bannon picked it up, glanced at it, then laid it down.

"The others didn't name me any prices," he said; there was a hint of embarrassment in his manner.

The Hawk's smile was benignant.

"It was impossible for them to do so, as I told you before. Just sign on that upper line, please."

Bannon swallowed hard.

"Sorry," he said. "I've decided not to buy."

"Wh-what!" exploded The Hawk.

The angry tone seemed to act on the boy like a tonic.

"I've decided not to buy," he repeated calmly. "We can't make castings out of the iron, and a manufacturer ought not to buy anything he can't use. Don't you agree with me, Mr. Hendershot?"

The broker stretched a shaking hand across the table.

"You said your foundryman liked the iron. You said you wouldn't use anything else. You said——"

Bannon laughed.

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"You must have misunderstood me. I said Hefferan had never seen anything like it. That's what he told me. I said *you* couldn't sell me anything else. Well, I'm afraid you couldn't."

Old Hawk Hendershot was almost inarticulate.

"You—you said," he spluttered, "that you were using the iron, that it wouldn't last——"

"I said I didn't expect to have a pound of it left, two weeks from now. I sha'n't. I've sold it all."

The words were like a life raft to a drowning man. The Hawk clutched at them wildly.

"Tell me where you sold it," he begged, with a facial contortion that was meant to be an ingratiating smile. "Let me get at the buyer right away, before he has time to melt any of that iron, and I'll give you a commission on every ton I sell him."

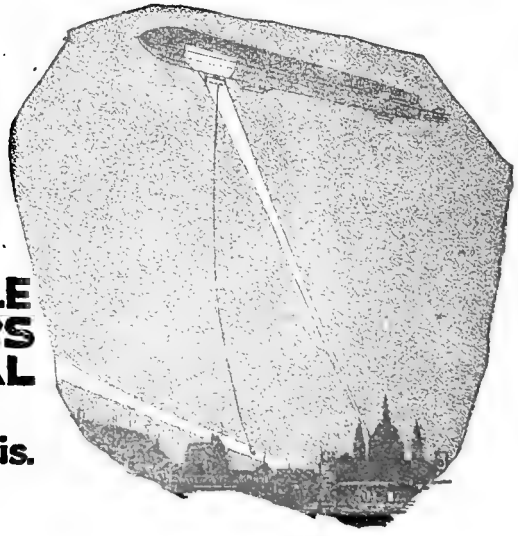
Bannon grinned. He leaned forward confidentially.

"If there's a chance to make money out of it," he said, "I'll put you in the way of getting the inside dope. I sold the iron through a man named Perrigord, who has an office in the Meredith Building. He had twelve hundred tons more of the same stuff, and I took an option on it at six dollars a ton. He agreed to act as my selling agent, and he seems to be a good one. An hour ago he telephoned me that he had just sold the whole fifteen hundred tons at ten dollars to a man he's had a grudge against for six years. Now, if you see Perrigord—Why, what's your hurry, Mr. Hendershot?"

The Hawk did not answer. He was dashing madly for his auto, in the vain hope that he might reach the bank before Major Perrigord had cashed that check.

THE BATTLE OF ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

By Raymond S. Harris.



SOME of the alarm bells were still ringing, but even as I strained far out of the narrow slit between two belfry pillars their warning clamor died away, and with it the last of the lights which a half hour before had made London a blaze and sparkling of brightness. Each of them seemed sucked down into the ocean of deep darkness.

The heavy air grew still—as silent as if the hour were nearly morning, instead of well before midnight. Seven million men and women drew this blackness about them, and huddled beneath it, speechless, shivering, while the pitiless leviathans of the air wheeled overhead. So, I thought, might be the cowering tribes have slunk in bygone ages, upon the appearance in the sky of some great winged, preying brute.

"We're like a lot of chickens, scurrying

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when a hawk comes over the yard," Pellkins put it to himself behind me, swearing guardedly.

I was looking at black sky and black city, seeking the hostile Zeppelins overhead, spying for the traitorous lights that doubtless would flash out below—signal lights, to be set by German agents near the important buildings. Paris fearful experience had taught us what to expect and how best to fight it.

My telephone at one hand, I moved further out into the little nave, until I stood actually over the opaque gulf. No lights as yet, no sound, only the beating of my pounding heart, and the restless shifting of the machine-gun crew on the other side of the pillar.

Suddenly a red light near the Thames, toward the Custom House, but before I could phone it was gone, and then—*pop—pop*— the shots of the vigilant patrol. Yes, they had their spies ready, and would they summon their winged destruction, despite all our efforts?

"They saw the light, sir," Pellkins whispered a moment later.

A short period of tense waiting. Then out of the blackness, down through thousands of feet, came a soft purring, a dull throb, throb, throb, a regular pounding that grew louder and more distinct.

"Captain Hontet," I reported over the telephone, "one of them is coming up, sir, from the south."

Before I hung up I heard him telling it to the others in the district defense headquarters.

Red glowed suddenly toward the Thames again.

"Another red light, sir, being shown upon or near the Mint."

No sound from below, but I knew that a motor load of armed men was speeding toward the spot, and that the spies would be killed and the light extinguished within a few minutes. But would that be soon enough?

From well overhead now the fury of the propellers beat down to us. Yet, gaze as we might, no sight of the air dreadnaught, huge and ominous.

Again a light, this time unmistakably intended to point out the Bank of England! Hurriedly the tingling message went over the wire, and another patrol was rushing on its way, whimpering with the eagerness to get there in time—in time.

Blackness still, save only for these two red holes in the dark blanket, burning steadily, powerfully, through the light haze. A rush of air crowded around me, and with it louder and louder the pulse-timing, relentless onward whirring of the angry brute. It seemed almost overhead, and far up, above the flashing column of light that suddenly reached into the sky with lightning speed, and began feeling in the hostile air for the war craft.

A second leaped up, a third and fourth, brushing aside the blackness as they came, grasping back and forth, crossing and diverging, impatiently, anxiously, desperately clutching through the void. No dread hull stood out in the brightness, and I, from my perch, knew why.

"Better have the searchlight stations notified, sir, to seek higher up—straight into the air. One is circling over us."

"Can't you get at it with your quick-firer, Lieutenant?" Captain Hontet asked.

"Too high, sir, and we can't see a thing," I answered. "I hope to get into action with it soon."

A half dozen shots pattered up from the city, and at once the nearest light snuffed out. A little later there was another shot. Then silence, except for the smothering throbbing of the propellers.

With steady stroke they hovered over us. Evidently the machine was circling, watching the signal lights, maneuvering for the first bomb that would begin the ruin of death and fire. Pellkins had the machine gun out to the edge of the space next me, and all were braced and ready to thrust its steel rod of bullets up into the monster's body.

"If they'd only point their silly searchlights higher," I heard Pellkins complain, and his voice was so natural that it steadied me.

My blood was racing, every nerve trembled with eagerness. So much depended upon us, the danger was so imminent, so awful, we were so helpless!

One of the arms of light straightened up into the dome overhead, and as it groped past the belfry a curious cage seemed to jump into being before us—the steel cage the Zeppelin unreels, by thousands of feet of wire cable. Within it was crouched the bomb-thrower, with the death pellets he was to feed the city. In a moment he might

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snap open the double-barred trap, cast forth one of his terrible weapons, and, closing it tightly again, defy the puny bullets of rifles and machine guns alike.

So one spider had come down on his steel filament from the web of death above, and begun swinging in the darkness over the city. The spider was near his prey indeed, too near. Their calculations had gone wrong up there. The spider had come too low.

"Fire!" I screamed, but the cage swung out of the path of light and was swallowed up.

"He's lower down than we are!" one of the men shrilled, and I heard Pellkins curse him into silence.

The light was feeling around again, for evidently the little cage had been noticed from below. Other shafts now shot up higher, following the cable, seeking the ship itself. *Whoo-oo-oom!* came the voice of a six-inch gun from below, and we smiled grimly while we waited, tense, quivering, sobbing, almost praying that the blind box, swinging and careening around us, would come into the light again.

"Look!" came from the man next Pellkins, and at the same time there was a crash from the dome below, and up came the steel cage, smashing its way, turning side over side around the spire, rending and grinding as the mighty power to which it was attached swept on above, unknowing. A stuttering roar from the machine gun as it struck the opening in front of Pellkins, the box almost at his gun muzzle.

NEXT it was in front of me, and I gave back involuntarily as it swung in, and then, filled with a wild rage to lay hands on it, mad at the thought that now it would swing off, out of our reach forever, bound beyond hope of stopping it upon the hellish work England tonight was looking to us to prevent, suddenly I sprang out, leaped upon the thing, and seized the steel cable from which it hung.

At the same moment it jumped free, and the air shrieked around me as it raced in a wide arc, spinning as it went. I sank down, one leg gripped around the cable, both hands hanging to it desperately. I had deserted the earth, and elected to do battle with this air demon in its own element. But even so, I glowed with a savage satisfaction.

Fly I might be, clinging to the spider's coat, but there I would grip until I sucked his blood. We would reverse nature, there in the misty night above London, pendent by a half mile of cable from the unconscious dirigible.

After that first wild sweep the pendulum oscillated more slowly, and there was no sense of movement, except that which came from breaking through the moist atmosphere. Yet we moved over the roof-tops at great speed, and swung regularly back and forth while doing so.

Tensed on the death-cage, unable to see above or below, I began to plan my attack. We had come to grips, the man in the cage and the one on top of it, and yet we had not. The bars were set so close together that a bullet could not pierce through. He could not shake me off, yet neither could I get at him.

Was I to hang there, snarling, while he hurled his hell over London, and then be pulled up into the airship, to serve as their amusement for a while, until shot and thrown back in derision?

A blinding radiance slapped me in the face—the searchlight had found the cage again.

"Back! Back here again, you fools!" I cried out in a frenzy.

And back it snapped, as if they had heard my voice so far. Dazzling light flared around us, and I peered down through the rods. Gazing up at me was a crouching German, hatless, shaken by his experience with St. Paul's, wondering what this was perched shouting upon his back.

There was a quick movement from the man, and the click of metal against metal as he thrust the muzzle of an automatic against a crack between the bars. Six times the gun spit out at me, and a sting ran through my left arm, crooked as I held to the cable. By Heaven! if lead could come out that armored box, then it could go in, and I clapped my own automatic against the bars where his bullets had bit off a piece of the steel.

Then blackness again—we had swung away, in our erratic course, from the searchlight's shaft. But at the moment I let fly with every shot in the chamber, and as I pumped away into the night the machine gun started again, ripping off its almost solid bolt of lead, seeking the cage, but likely to find its own commanders. And again the boom of the big gun, this time

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aimed at us. The shell screeched past, and as I raised up to stuff my automatic full I called out angrily—

"Too far to the right!"

No further sound from my enemy as we dangled and circled in the darkness, though I listened for the slightest movement. Minutes passed, but still the impenetrable dark and quiet from within. Was he dead, or ready to retaliate with the first burst of light? I took no chances, and filled the cage with bullets again.

Still no sound. At least I had taken his activities from the defenseless city, given those below more time to locate the enemy before the bombardment would begin.

As I gazed down I became aware of a double signal of red lights staring up at us, and for a long time we hovered over them, evidently those above giving every opportunity for the bomb-thrower to loose his destruction. Probably they wondered, up there, what had happened to him, and speculated as to whether the cage-door had stuck, or if possibly a splinter of lead from the machine gun's battering had found its way into the cage, and ended his bomb-throwing forever.

Where were those blind searchlights? I glared off at them, where they felt through the heavens a good quarter-mile away. When I looked below again the two red lights had gone, and then I saw that we had moved away from them. Another grew under us, however, and for several minutes we oscillated over it, the bomb-thrower having a dozen opportunities to drop his missiles on the very light itself, had he desired. Yet no movement from him.

Again we must be moving off, for the light seemed to dim; but no, we were yet over it. We were moving, but surely—and my heart beat more wildly still—we were mounting up, up, lifting from the earth at remarkable speed, rapidly being reeled into the airship.

The red light below suddenly was a carmine dot, and I realized how swiftly the steel box was being recalled to its source. In haste I filled my automatic once more, spilling a precious cartridge or two off into the air. For I was going up to meet two dozen of the enemy upon their own craft, a half mile above London, with only the guns of my forces to help me, to help by bringing down the whole crew of us together.

We swung on a constantly narrowing arc, and as the cage steadied I gradually made out the long, black hull of the air-cruiser. It grew more definite, a dark, menacing mass, into the midst of which we sped. Straight up, and through the keel I was hauled, and I rose to my feet, holding by my wounded left arm to the cable, my gun ready in my right.

Up through a shaft in the monster now, and suddenly, with a jerk, level with the deck itself. In the semi-darkness—a soft light, not visible from below, suffused this walkway between the two cabins—stood a half dozen men, all dressed in German uniforms.

WITH a bound I was off the cage, and three fell to my first three shots.

"*Engländer!*" one shouted behind me, and a shot sang by and off into space.

I wheeled and brought him down, and the other two rushed for the cabin nearest them, for evidently they were unarmed. This was as I had hoped, and following the plan laid out as I journeyed up, I pressed after them, filling the automatic again as I ran. Both were fumbling at a rack over a small table, and one whirled, his revolver raised, as I gained the door.

He went down with a crash against his fellow, and him I missed, with the first shot, but brought down, with a bullet in the brain, as he sought to get his balance.

The cabin was mine, and my only hope was to keep it, even though the whole ship's company stormed it. Indeed, they were aroused. There were hurried feet racing along the deck from the forward cabin, and I flattened against the wall and waited.

First came an officer, and I shot him as his excited and questioning face appeared. Two more stopped precipitously behind him, and next there was a crash of glass, and a heavy curtain, there to shut in the light, was torn down from the window.

A fiery pain burned across my chest as he fired, but I recovered and fired back twice, though going wild. Another head thrust itself through the doorway, and my pistol snapped uselessly. It was empty.

So I jumped at him with the revolver reversed, and we went down with a crash, while the one who had been so close to ending me from the window took sudden panic, and streaked off to the other cabin, shouting:

"*Engländer! Der Feind!*"

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That was a powerful German, and I knew him for an athlete as soon as we grappled. Lord, what a grip he had on my throat! I dropped the pistol in pure self-defense, for I needed both hands, and it promised to be a long tussle.

"*Hülfe!*" he cried, as I struck him again and again in the face. "*Es ist nur einer!*"

Those blows hurt him. Suddenly he let go and tried swiftly for a new hold, to pinion my arms, but I shook free, and, stooping, threw him over my back with the ju-jutsu trick Nogi taught me when we were fellow-students at Christ College. And though I live to be a very old man I will never forget the horror on his face as he faced the bottomless black under him, nor the long scream that came from his plunging body.

"There's a present for the Lord Mayor," I yelled, more than half of it hysteria, as I whipped back into the cabin and seized one of the revolvers from the floor.

I swept the deck with it, and they gave back, one down and quiet, one staggering. I pulled a rifle from the wall, but it was empty. There were more of my own cartridges in my belt, but to venture out on deck for my automatic now meant death from the far cabin.

Three other revolvers, all loaded, were in the rack, and I took one in each hand, and slipped the third in a pocket—first darkening the lights on either side by throwing over them the coats stripped from the dead men. That made the deck space seem brighter, and in contrast rendered my position almost black. So I took my stand inside the door, ready to pick off sharpshooters from the other end, or do my best to beat back an attack.

The cage upon which I had boarded the vessel stood almost in the center of the middle deck, and for a time I considered stealing up behind it, and from that position pouring a volley into the cabin. But I did not know what lay behind my own cabin, or if they could go overhead and take me from the rear.

Better for the weaker force to hold a good position than take chances of defeat by changing. That is always good strategy.

WHILE I was considering this action, something moving in the cage caught my eye. Against the dim light I saw a figure slowly arise. It fell back, but again straightened, and then the steel door opened, and out crawled what had once been a man.

The spatter of lead from my bullets had torn him like miniature shrapnel. His nose seemed gone, and there was a great gap in one cheek. So, grisly, swaying, he crouched out, and stood as if in a stupor. What process passed in that brain can not be known, but it seemed to realize that his duty had not been done, and as I gaped at the thing, and shuddered at my work, he stooped and touched the lever that released the cage.

Instantly the steel box dove out of sight, the cable humming as it unreeled round after round. The figure stood and watched while it sped downward, until at last it came to the end and stopped with a jerk that shook the whole vessel. That seemed to arouse the man. He looked about the deck and raised his eyes to the cabin, then back to where his superiors lay in their blood. Memory and realization came with that, for he gave a great anguished cry and collapsed, pitching forward through the cage hole, and left every man on the boat, I have no doubt, cold and shivering.

That took the killing lust out of me. I had enough of blood-letting, and yet, incongruously, the thought came, "Can't I end this nightmare of blood by bringing us all to death together?"

I wished to be rid of the horror, but there is no retreat for a man penned in a prison above the clouds, save the straight and conclusive one back to earth, and this route I would take, bringing the War Lord's cruiser with me, for my country's sake.

Not, however, by shooting my way into the gas-envelope. I looked out and up at it, but knew it to be armored against the onslaught of weapons more powerful than the ones I had at hand. There was nothing to do except seek to paralyze the craft's nerve-centers. I walked back into a small room off the cabin, thrusting aside the dark curtain at the inner doorway.

It was the pilot-house. Below, through the glass floor, showed the lights of a city. In front of me were various levers, buttons and cranks, their uses to me unknown. Yet this was the control-center, and it was undoubtedly from a duplicate installation in the other cabin that the ship was now being handled. But I would take charge at this end.

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Working madly, for now I was determined to bring all to earth, I reversed the position of every appliance there—pulled back levers, shoved cranks over, pushed each button, even. Bells tinkled about the craft, there was a grinding of machinery, and a whirring that told of other propellers started somewhere. A shock set the hull to quivering.

What a jangle of yells broke out from the enemy's cabin, too! They realized that I was at the wrecking of the ship. Now they would be after me!

I pulled and kicked at dumb contrivances, and finally tore open the door of a little metal box on the wall, and jerked down a copper chain hanging in it. Immediately the roar of escaping gas dominated all sounds. I had ripped the gas-envelopes, or some of them, at least. I had pulled the emergency cord that brings the vessel to earth if a sudden descent becomes imperative, and I had done the work thoroughly.

As the gas whistled out, the whole wild crew smashed into the cabin, and from my alcove I instinctively and savagely began the fight for life again, while slowly the vessel tipped and canted, rolling slowly back and forth.

The first shots struck me, and I would have died there had they not been so frantic. But they crowded over my body, and I shot into the mass again and again until the hammers clicked on empty shells.

One man, insane with rage, threw himself on me and tore at my throat, and suddenly relaxed and rolled off, shot by his fellows. They wasted their bullets on the floor, the walls, one another, and then, when the listing of the stricken liner threw them all in a heap over me and the dead, they fought to get free of the cabin, and some managed to pull themselves up and out of the door, and were pushed off into the night by those behind them.

Crash after crash shook the vessel as it rapidly assumed a perpendicular position, for it was divesting itself of guns and machinery. Yet this lightening of the load, so fearful then, helped to make the descent less rapid and saved us all from being crushed to death when the mass plumped with rending force into the woods, and enveloped all in wreckage. Not, of course, that I was conscious at the end of that four-thousand-foot fall.

When they pulled me out from under the tangle and the welter of bodies, I was at first thought a traitor, joined the Germans, and a countryman gave me the kick that brought me to. But the soldiers held him back and took me to a hospital, and before many hours my mother and sisters were beside me.

Captain Hontet called at the bedside a day or two later.

"Do you know, Lieutenant," he asked, "what Sergeant Pellkins said to me over the wire a minute or so after you had boarded the bomb-cage?"

"What was it, sir?"

" 'I have to report, sir,' he stated steadily, 'that Lieutenant Barrington left to engage the enemy a few moments ago, and I believe, sir, that he will give a good account of himself.'

"I thought at the time, Lieutenant, that Pellkins was a bit over-enthusiastic, but I've come to the conclusion that, after all, he spoke with true British conservatism."

THE DESERT

by MARY CAROLYN DAVIES

THE desert is a nun, for no man's wooing,
Vowed to eternal silence through the years;
Serene, unchangeable, past all pursuing
And all neglect—the desert knows no tears.

A nun who never felt the pulse of sorrow,
Whom no desire nor passion can e'er sway,
Who does not know the meaning of tomorrow
And has long since forgotten yesterday.

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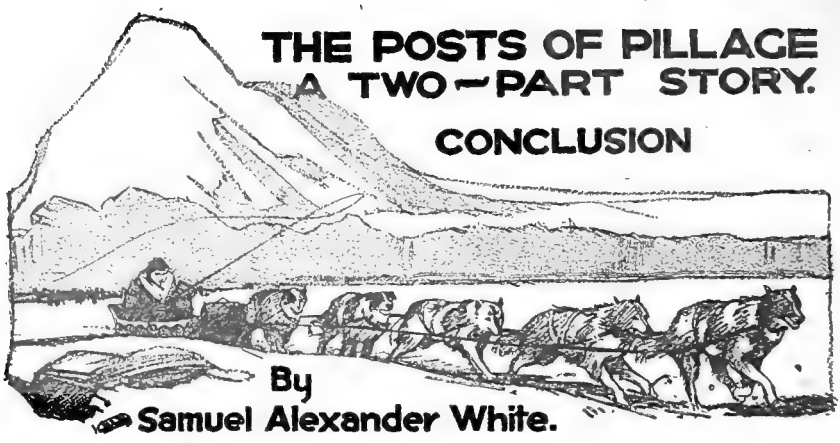

THE POSTS OF PILLAGE
A TWO-PART STORY.
CONCLUSION

By
Samuel Alexander White.

Author of "The Making of Louis Lavergne," "The Azoic Law," etc.

SYNOPSIS: "Some day I shall become a great voyageur and follow into your Northland to claim you," promises youthful *François Lavergne*, as *Masita*, soft-eyed daughter of *Dubawni*, a Free-Trader in furs, leaves Quebec for her father's post.

Years later, the Hudson's Bay Company is locked in a death struggle with Arctic Fur for the mastery of Northeastern Canada. Arctic Fur is led by *Helbaud*, the ruthless. Each company has tried often but vainly to win over the Free-Trader, *Dubawni*, whose forces, thrown either way, would decide the struggle.

On his way south with a year's supply of furs, and accompanied by *Masita*, the Free-Trader is captured by Arctic Fur men and taken to *Helbaud's* stronghold. Here *Masita* meets *François Lavergne*, apparently in *Helbaud's* employ, but secretly a Hudson's Bay spy. In the face of threats, *Dubawni* refuses again to join the Arctic Fur Company. Enraged at the Free-Trader's defiance, *Helbaud* orders *Dubawni* strung up to a tree; at the same time he determines to marry *Masita* and despatches *François* down-river for the priest.

François speeds, however, to the hiding-place of *Ivan Trevor*, Hudson's Bay Factor, and his men, nearby. They plan to rescue the Free-Trader. *Trevor* accordingly disguises himself as a priest and returns with *François*. The Hudson's Bay men follow in canoes, and in the river shadows await the signal to attack. *François* and the Factor arrive in time to find *Masita* struggling in *Helbaud's* embrace, and *Dubawni* tortured nearly to the point of unconsciousness.

CHAPTER XV

THE MINISTERING HAND

AS THROUGH an opaque film Lavergne's and the factor's canoe drove out of the dark into the bloody light. For an instant the glare of the monster fire dazzled them, but the next moment their eyes took in the bare sweep of rock-beach and the horde that peopled it.

The reverberating, carousing clamor of the horde was stilled, but in its attitude of tense, silent waiting, there seemed greater menace than in its babel. All the way up behind them the big six-fathom fur canoes headed by Chakoni, Sachelle and their crew, had listened to the same song, and the nerves of all, from factor down to packer, were thrilling at the portent of the words. No law past Quebec? Well, if the Arctic Fur sweepingly suspended statute, edict, ægis, so much the better. Whatever was to be done could be done with a clear conscience and a light heart!

And keyed, expectant, tense as those on shore, the crews on the water waited for whatever that necessary thing might be. They hung off in the dark while Lavergne and the factor drove into the light, and though they dared not paddle close enough to see, the sudden, ominous stillness that fell upon the beach told them that François and Ivan Trevor were approaching the shore and the climax of the up-stream drive.

In the midst of a paddle stroke the factor paused to draw the hood of his cassock closer, and then as he dipped again, he caught the low imprecation of Lavergne in

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the bow. With a twist of his wrist he swung the stern a trifle to see past the huge shoulders of his brigade-leader. Before his narrowed, sharp-focussed eyes the blurred throng on the beach took shape and substance and individuality.

In the forefront, close to the water-line, he glimpsed the girl in Helbaud's grip, and he interpreted Lavergne's malediction.

"But you will be curbing yourself, François," he warned in a subdued mumble. "For the love of Heffen, do not be losing the game at this crisis. Besides, he is not harming her. He but holds her arm, you will be noting, and she—she has been hearing the call of the curlew and she knows who comes. But I am wondering about the Free-Trader. I am not seeing him anywhere—'fore God, yes, I am! Look, François, look!"

His voice rasped in a hiss.

"Yonder he is! Are you seeing? Strung to yon lone tree that towers above the mob! It is that we have interrupted, and by the beard of Torngak, we have interrupted none too soon. Swift, man, swift! It is the girl first. She is near the water-line. And then Dubawni if we may! But mind, I will be having Helbaud in cognizance. Do not lose your temper and wits to smite him prematurely. Your business is to snatch the girl. Watch me, François, every second. Syne when you see me move, you will be moving likewise!"

Two more strong, quick paddle-strokes took them to the rock-beach. The factor whirled the canoe in close, with its nose pointing up-stream, and François stepped cleanly out upon the shore.

"Well done, François," commended Helbaud. "Never have I had such a voyageur. You go where I say, bring what I want and lose no time over it. I chafed somewhat, and said you should be here, but that is natural impatience. I see that you have made time. *Mon Dieu*, no other man could do better—or half as well! It is my impatience. And there is cause. Look at my bride. Ha! You understand! Even Father Boccairre will be forgiving me for impatience. Will you not, Boccairre?"

With a satisfied chuckle Helbaud swung Masita to the front for inspection, and Ivan Trevor, huge, bulky-cassocked, stepped out before her from the craft that Lavergne held.

François had the bow of the canoe but barely caught upon the beach, floating so lightly that a shove would send it free into the current, and with one hand upon it he half turned, low-crouched to spring when Ivan Trevor moved, and as he crouched thus his eyes flashed a message that Masita understood.

"Will you not, Boccairre?" Helbaud laughingly repeated. "You are smitten dumb, eh? And good reason. There is none like her in the North. It breeds wild beauty if there is the pure white blood with which to start. Yes, and it breeds the men to mate with such beauty. *Mon Dieu*, take your holy bachelor self, the North feeds you well. You grow stout, Boccairre. You grow strong."

"Aye," thundered Ivan in a voice that widened Helbaud's astounded eyes and jarred his jaws agape, "I grow strong; strong enough to smash you and your wiles and wickedness and tefflish plans!"

HE STRUCK as he spoke, straight and violent and swift, with the tremendous muscles of the arm beneath the innocent cassock. His maul-like fist took the Arctic Fur leader squarely between the eyes. Helbaud turned a backward somersault and landed, half stunned, upon the hard rock-beach.

Lavergne had sprung the instant the blow started.

And not he alone!

Masita, swift with the swiftness of the wilderness-born, intuitive with the intuition of those who dwell in the silent places, had leaped to meet him. In a flash she was caught up in his arms, and she clung to him with a little sob of gratitude.

"*Mon Dieu*, François, I knew you would come. And it is Ivan Trevor in the cassock. *Mon Dieu*, what a blow! I shall love him for it all the days of my life. And you, François, and you! I would to Heaven there were no feud, François, and I would try to repay you as no woman ever repaid. But there, I talk wildly and say too much, as I always do. There is a feud. And my father, François, you must leave me and not fail to get to him. You have men? The factor has men?"

"Yes," exulted François, holding her close as he leaped for the canoe, "and we must try to get to him. Factor! Factor! Call them in!"

"There is no need," declared Ivan, leaping after the two. "Sachelle had his orders

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to drive in as soon as he heard my voice. They will be alongside in a crack. But this is no time to be speculating. Into the canoe with you both. With Masita once safe in our craft we will be making a battering-ram rush at yon crowd under the tree."

Swiftly François deposited Masita amidships, eased the craft off the beach, and simultaneously he and the factor stepped into their places in bow and stern and dashed in their paddles with a force that made the river water boil.

A rumbling roar of oaths arose behind them on the shore, and looking over their shoulders, they glimpsed Helbaud staggering to his feet from the factor's blow.

"God forgie's my restraint!" ejaculated Ivan. "I was not hitting hard enough. And yet I dared not let go the full power for fear of smashing his skull in like an awk's egg. Now he will be hieing his wild wolves on, and I see stern work ahead. Listen to the maniac! 'Fore Heffen, François, break paddle and back and all, but put her through!"

For Helbaud, his face the face of a demon in his rage and pain, was running straight through the fire toward his men, and shouting out violent words.

"It is a trick!" he screeched. "It is Ivan Trevor and the Hudson's Bay men. And Dubawni has been in league with them. Man the canoes, I say! Man the canoes, you stupid, drunken fools! Man and give chase, and do not stop till their bones lie in the river-bed to feed the crabs!"

CHAPTER XVI

LAGGARDS

INSTANTLY the dense crowd upon the beach broke into an aimless, kaleidoscopic shifting. The amazing suddenness of Ivan Trevor's blow had taken them unawares. Many, indeed, so thickly the mob bunched under the spruce-tree, had not seen him fell Hillaire Helbaud at all, and knew not what the clamor was all about.

Helbaud's cry of Hudson's Bay men and treachery, and his frantic commands for some to run and some to stay confused them. Their wits were none too clear for anything, what with the long session round the rum barrels by the fire, and they had been careless about their weapons.

Their small arms they had by them, knives and belt-axes, but the rifles of many were pillowed in the fur bales and sacks of supplies piled in the dark warehouses and under the sheds and flies at the other end of the beach near the council-hall.

One moment they were all running for these, the next moment they were all halting, colliding and stumbling at Helbaud's reiterated commands, and not until he ran madly among them, striking out indiscriminately with oaths and shouts, did he pound his meaning into them.

"A dozen!" he shrieked. "A dozen men only stay to watch this schemer. The rest after that other traitor, François, and his breed. And, by Heaven, Dubawni, if we can not catch them, you shall swing for them all!"

In demoniacal rage he shook his fist in the Free-Trader's face, shoved back bodily a near-dozen of men to guard him, and grasped the arm of Betarde, the sentinel, who had slid ape-like down the trunk.

"Swift, Betarde," he urged. "You seem to have the soberest head of them all. Lead them, and if you catch the devils you shall have the head voyageur's place!"

With Helbaud rushing after him Betarde sprang away, jerking sharp, guttural commands over his shoulder to his fellows.

He swore in English, spat forth hybrid French, mingled with slang of the Gulf ports and native words of the Montagnais dialect, and they took his meaning far more easily than the bombastic shouts of Helbaud.

Watching from the water as they drove their paddles, Ivan Trevor, François Lavergne and Masita saw them sweeping in a flying wedge, the lithe tawny Iroquois and Montagnais outstripping the others and pressing hard on Betarde's heels, and after them stringing the scum of the Gulf ports, the off-scourings of the seas, the hard-bitten wreckers of Anticosti and Sable Island, outlawed sealers and fishermen from far Newfoundland, St. Pierre and Miquelon.

They did not swerve for the fire or the rum barrels. They swept straight on, charging through the smoke and the coals, and from their reckless feet the burning embers flew up in showers, and the empty barrels toppled this way and that, went rolling down the rocks like war-drums thundering to battle.

They were into the dark sheds and flies and squirming forth again with their rifles,

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but Ivan and François had met the big fur canoes plunging up to their aid.

"Sachelle, you and Chakoni take three canoes and run their crafts off the beach before they can get to them. For the lives of you, don't let them get afloat. I will be taking the other three canoes and making a dash for Dubawni."

Like great water monsters the three fur craft strained up-stream for the point where the Arctic Fur canoes were drawn up on the beach. They lay to a few yards from the shore, the bowsmen and the steersmen alone holding the crafts stationary by paddling against the current, while the rest of the men leaped out into the shallow water and rushed for Helbaud's crafts.

They had the advantage in the race, for the canoes had glided faster than the Arctic Fur men could run. Craft after craft Sachelle's crews caught up and flung upon the current which whirled them down-stream like Autumn leaves.

As they heaved the last one in, Helbaud, Betarde and his men were half way across the beach, but as they rushed, the rifles of the Hudson's Bay men rattled spitefully. Lead ricochetted from the rocks in front of the rushing feet, and here and there a leg, an arm or a shoulder sheathed the glancing missiles.

With a grim joy Sachelle and Chakoni saw many fling backward on the rocks and cease their efforts at running.

Nor were the Arctic Fur men slow to retaliate. They fell flat on the beach so as to escape the hail of balls that whined overhead and poured a steady fusillade toward the water-line. The forest echoed with the wicked volleys, but Helbaud's hirelings lacked a target. For the Hudson's Bay men hid formless in the gloom against the inky background of the river, while the recumbent figures of the Arctic Fur men were silhouetted in a blaze of light.

The moment he had decisively halted Helbaud's force, Sachelle with a quick command recalled his men through the shallow water to the canoes.

"Joomp in," he ordered, "an' we be back oop de factor in hees dash!"

Helbaud had no craft left upon the shore to stop them as they whirled by. He was worsted in his launching, and the knowledge sent him into a greater paroxysm of rage that withered his men like the fire of the Hudson's Bay.

"You cursed laggard dogs!" he choked, springing to his feet. "Why didn't you jump at my first word? Blast your muddled minds, you could have been afloat and on even terms with them if you had moved when I commanded. I always have to hammer action into you with a club. Get up, you cowards, get up. You can at least help jerk this devilish Dubawni to the stars!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE SLIP OF THE NOOSE

IN A line with Sachelle's crews at the upper end of the beach, but a considerable distance down-stream from them and just opposite the leaning spruce-tree where Helbaud's dozen ringed Dubawni round, Ivan Trevor's small craft drove in at the head of the other three fur canoes. With any of the Arctic Fur crafts afloat it meant swift death for him and his companions to land. Balls would riddle them, and the sieved canoes, Masita and all, would go to the bottom of the Manikuagan.

But watching as eagerly and as anxiously as the man and the girl who accompanied him, the factor exclaimed in joy as he beheld Sachelle's crews shove the Arctic Fur canoes adrift and beat Helbaud's horde back from the water-line.

"Fair grand!" he shouted. "Now is our turn. You, Masita, crouch low. Do not be showing yourself above the gunwale, for they are firing wild. We will be driving like a wedge to your father. Aye, we will be driving so or I will neffer be looking into your sweet eyes again."

He ripped away the bulky cassock for freer movement as they reached the shore and, leaving Masita alone in the craft, leaped out at the head of his crews. But the moment they leaped out was the moment Helbaud sprang up to curse his laggards and rush himself for the lone spruce-tree.

"To the stars with him!" they heard him shouting. "He shall work no more ruses on me!"

"*Mon Dieu!*" urged the voice of Masita from the canoe. "Be quick! In the name of my mother, be quick!"

In a solid wedge, Ivan and Lavergne its point, the Hudson's Bay men drove from the water-line straight at the group under the spruce-tree. Wild shots from Helbaud's men running at the other end of the beach

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hit the rocks in front of them, but the missiles did not slacken their speed.

"With the might of you!" spurred the factor, the solid rock thundering under his tread. "With all the might of you, men!"

With a smashing impact they hit the ring around Dubawni. Men toppled this way and that, fists jabbed and swung, belt-axes and knives flashed in the firelight, but even as Dubawni had gone down under his captors, his captors went down under superior numbers. He himself felt a knife rasp across the dangling rope, and the next moment he was rushing down the shore and splashing through the shallow water between Ivan and Lavergne.

"Sachelle! Chakoni!" roared the factor. "Be quick, men! Hold them off while we clamber aboard!"

An answering shout came from the chief trader, whose canoes were already flying toward them, kicking up a wash as they whirled along, the river boiling to the sweep of the double rows of paddles, and spraying to the slap of the huge curving bows.

"*Mon Dieu*, father!" breathed Masita, as he, Ivan and Lavergne came alongside the small canoe she was holding in the current for them. "Get in. I thought my heart would burst. All three of you get in this second. I can not draw breath till you do!"

"All right, *petite*, all right," rumbled Dubawni, swinging aboard. "But a man must get his wind."

All about them pandemonium was raging. To the law and letter of the factor's command, Sachelle was covering the embarking into the eighteen-footer and into the other three canoes.

Helbaud's men had rallied from the smashing charge and were heeling the Hudson's Bay men to the water's edge. Helbaud himself was heading the scores from the other end of the beach. Into the shallow water they all plunged, rushing knee-deep, waist-deep, to cut off Ivan Trevor's band. But, leaping like express trains into their midst bored Sachelle's huge fur-canoes, driving irresistibly, propelled by man-power that lusted for the fray.

Down went dozens of the Arctic Fur men under the bumping prows, and over the gunwales waged a hand-to-hand fight.

Too closely huddled in the water to shoot, Helbaud's men dared not use their weapons in the ordinary way. Nor could the factor's crews loose bullets into the rabble to settle the thing. Their canoes were all jammed up in Helbaud's forces, and with every man in them twisting and lunging and striking, a ball was more likely to hit a friend than an enemy.

So it was knife and belt-ax, rifle-butt and poised paddle amid demoniacal shouts and geyser spouts of water, but here again the Hudson's Bay brigade had the advantage which made up for their lack of numbers. All were now afloat. Their foes were waist-deep in the water. And deliberately the brigade drew the fight into deeper water.

Almost before they were aware, Helbaud's men lost their footing, plunged overhead and came up to flounder ashore as best they might.

Helbaud alone, no fool and no coward in spite of his insane rage, maintained the battle.

Out as far as he could go in the stream, the water up to his shoulders and the last canoe containing Sachelle's and Chakoni's crews an arm's length beyond his reach, he lunged after it, and with a swift overhead stroke brought a belt-ax ripping down through the stern.

The edge of the steersman's paddle descended on his head as he struck, and like a stunned fish he drifted shoreward into the hands of his men, but his ax had done its work, and the hindmost fur canoe sank like a bottomless box.

Like a dozen beavers the heads of the crew came up on the surface.

"Swim for it," ordered Sachelle. "Be follow de factor's canoe down into de dark. We be pick you oop dere, 'cause we don't want no more dat ax work!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ARMISTICE

BELOW the half-moon fire-stain upon the Manikuagan the fur-canoes lay to.

Sachelle with a few words directed the distribution of the swimmers.

"Two men into each dose first t'ree canoes an' t'ree men into each dose last two. Bime-by we be catch wan of Helbaud's craft in de eddies an' you can take her."

Quickly the swimmers glided under the curving sterns and were hauled aboard.

"Fair grand!" nodded the factor approvingly. "It is a small loss for the gain we are getting. But you will be remembering,

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men, that though you won your skirmish this night you are not done with Hillaire Helbaud and his Arctic Fur Company. With his senses will come back his ire. He will be trying to head us at the Height of Land. And there, I am telling you, it will be no skirmish but a man-size battle. So be holding yourselves in all humility and in the fear of God. We have but six dozen-odd, and he has hundreds."

Dubawni in the bow of the canoe half turned his body on the thwart.

"You may add six dozen more to those," he observed quietly. "I secretly ordered my crews up the Kawikwanipinis River, and since you're working up through Ishimanikuagan Lake we can unite with them upon the Kawikwanipinis River or upon Mistinik Lake. They fight with you as far as Cambrian Lake. But more than that I will not promise."

"Man," spoke the factor, extending his huge hand forward from amidships, "that is grand news. I am thanking you for it, and more than that I am not asking you to promise."

And Masita, leaning back against Lavergne's knees where he sat in the steersman's seat, gave a little exclamation of joy.

"*Mon Dieu*, François!" she whispered impetuously. "My father declares an armistice. And I, in the days we go North together, I declare one too!"

In the secrecy of the velvet river-gloom she upturned her face to his.

CHAPTER XIX

THE END OF THE MAN-HUNT

"MAN," declared Ivan Trevor, his hand upon the arm of Dubawni, the free-trader, as they went over the portage 'round Granite Fall, the North has effer looked on strange friendships formed under her brooding, nirvanic eyes. But she has neffer looked on stranger friendship than ours. I am telling you I am sorry it is nearing its end. I am sorry that it is our last portage upon the Kaniapiskau and that Cambrian Lake lies not far beyond. For there we will be coming to your fort, Dubawni Post, and the end of our alliance. Unless, forbye, you have been changing your mind and considering amalgamation with the Hudson's Bay Company.

"Dubawni, for why will you not consider the move? The Hudson's Bay is an honorable institution, and in amalgamation with it lies your means and essence of existence. Not for your solitary sake, but also for the sake of your daughter Masita—" nodding toward the girl walking ahead with his own brigade-leader François Lavergne— "who has all of life before her and whose youth should in no manner of being be embittered with feud and strife and all. You are understanding me? It is plain talk I am giving, for the issues rise plainly before me. Of the three fur companies warring for the possession of the hinterland of the Labrador, mark me, your band of Free-Traders is the weakest. And it grieves me sore after plucking you and Masita out of the hands of Hillaire Helbaud of the Arctic Fur to be compelled in the name of my corporation to turn against you and crush or, mayhap, see you crushed in a three-cornered fight."

"I know," returned Dubawni grimly, "and it hurts me too, Trevor. I have not forgotten what you and Lavergne and the rest of your men did for me and Masita the night Helbaud seized us and confiscated our whole year's cargo of furs upon the Manikuagan. I shall remember it longer than I shall remember Helbaud and the theft of the fur, and that, look you, will be a lengthy period. But still I do not change. I am not the kind that changes. Independence is my idol, and the unclaimed wilderness its shrine."

"But the girl, man, the girl!" protested Ivan.

"As it is with me, so it is with Masita. She is the image and the reincarnation of her mother. For, look you, when the Arctic Fur Company under Helbaud sacked my Opawika Post and drove me out of Quebec her mother stayed at my side—stayed to her death and my sorrow."

"Aye, man, and the daughter may be staying to your death and her sorrow! Are you countenancing yon contingency? And, forbye, there are other considerations. You have neffer been heralded in the North as a blind man, Dubawni—" nodding again toward Masita and Lavergne—"and I am not thinking for a darting minute that you have not seen.

"Losh, in the weeks we have traveled devious waterways up to the Height of Land and over to give yon whelp Helbaud the slip I'll warrant effery soul of our united

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brigades has seen, and most of all you yourself, for a father's jealous optics are effer the first to focus upon his daughter's chosen of men. Aye, there is no gainsaying the fact that you have seen. And was it not in romantic Quebec they schooled together? Yes, yes, dod yes, and now time has swung back for them or romance has scudded forward, I am not knowing which!"

"Bah!" ridiculed the Free-Trader, albeit there was trouble in his eyes. "Such romance is a childish thing, a schooltime thing. It never lives."

"It has lived—or else been given birth again," assured Ivan solemnly. "Man, I have mastered and directed many men—aye, and women too, and none can master and direct if he can not see into the deeps of the natures of the ones he sways. Yon's logic, eh? And into the deeps of Masita's and François's natures I am seeing plain, and you, Dubawni, likewise are seeing plain.

"You know in your secret heart you are seeing, though your tongue will be giving your heart the lie. Aye, it is the heart that tells, and right in the youthful hearts of yon two ahead will their grimmest specter of trouble stalk and their hardest battle be fought. Man, are you not interpreting me? I am not asking you to save her from the mere physical danger that looms large on my forevision. I am asking you to save her from foredoomed defeat in the battle between desire and denial. I am asking you to spare her the torture on the rack of conflicting love and allegiance, the remorse, the sacrifice, the self-abnegation, the supreme renunciation. This is what I am asking you, Dubawni—" with a pressure on the free trader's arm that was intimate, human, compelling—"and I know whereof I am speaking. For, man, mark you, I have been through and suffered something of it myself!"

"She has spoken no word of it to me," declared Dubawni. "All these weeks she has spoken no word."

"No, nor would she be speaking to the end of her days—if the trail lasted that long. She is your own breed, the Dubawni breed, and she will neffer be giving sign. But for all and all, that lifts no infinitesimal speck of responsibility from you."

"She has spoken no word to me," reiterated Dubawni stubbornly.

"And François," the factor went on, unheeding, "whereffer did you cast eyes on a mightier man? Mighty not alone in body but in heart, far-traveled, skilled, with the foundation knowledge of the schools. Aye, and by no manner of being lowly in position either. Brigade-leader he is now, Dubawni, and syne he will be taking the highest honor. I am making him factor of the new Cambrian post I have planned to build."

"*MON DIEU!*" exclaimed the Free-Trader, his exclamation rumbling low down in his throat like a growl. "I had not thought of that. It will be a bitter thing, Trevor. If there is aught between them as you hint, it will be a bitter thing."

"Man, it will be a tefflish thing!" Ivan burst out impetuously. "Passive enmity is hard enough, but active warfare upon any you have come to care for racks the heart and sears the soul. God forgie's the necessity of putting him in command at Cambrian House that he himself will build, but it is in the interests of my company. The post must be in the strongest of strong hands, for I can not be there effery fighting minute myself. There is the all-important Chimo headquarters to look after, you will be remembering. I have men marshaled there for the campaign in addition to these I have summoned from the St. Lawrence Gulf posts, and there is the provisioning and the transportation to attend to. Forgie's, man, that I should be so blunt, but there is no denying that things have come to a crisis in the Kaniapiskau Valley. You are no holding it against me?"

"No, no! You must be making all preparations. And I, also! Men will flock to Dubawni Post at my call, and you know as well as I do that I shall send out the call."

"In spite of all, you will be sending it out?"

"Yes. It is either that or give up my independence to the Hudson's Bay Company. Trevor, it has taken years and years to build up that independence, my post and my trade, and it does not die in a moment. You know what manner of man I am, and I think you understand."

"Aye," sighed Ivan resignedly and with an air of finality, "I am understanding you. I am seeing that there is no moving you, and we may as well be heeling the rest across the portage, for I must be confessing that for the sake of private conversation I have been lagging behind. Let us be catching up to the rest—the teffle!"

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He stopped short, listening, for a rapid fusillade of rifles broke forth abruptly ahead.

"What in the name of Torngak have they struck? Some deer crossing the stream, I'll warrant! François! Man, man! Stop yon criminal waste of ammunition! One shot will drop a caribou, or, at the most, two. For why will they be throwing away shells that syne they will be needing sore?"

But Lavergne did not heed, did not apparently hear. Ivan and Dubawni saw him thrust Masita down into a depression in the rocks and crouch himself, his rifle-muzzle poking over the edge of the granite and spitting forth a stream of fire.

"'Fore Heffen!" cried Ivan. "I misjudged. Yon artillery roar is over bigger game. It is no deer-hunt, Dubawni. It is a man-hunt, and we are the hunted. For are yon not Helbaud's curs I am glimpsing? Look! Down by the edge of the river, between us and the water. Is that not Helbaud himself gesticulating orders, and the broad one beside him, is it not that gorilla-like Betarde who was your chief hangman yon night on the Manikuagan?"

"*Mon Dieu*, yes, it is Helbaud and his Arctic Fur dogs," confirmed Dubawni in an ominous growl. "I shall not soon forget that ape Betarde. *Ciel*, to have given Helbaud the slip for one hundred and fifty miles and over only to get trapped in the end! I tell you, Trevor, it gripes!"

For the Free-Trader's mind swept back over the trail they had followed to escape a pitched battle with Helbaud's superior numbers, a trail that wound not up the main-traveled Kaniapiskau, but off to the eastward in the void and silent spaces of the Labrador wilderness. From the Manikuagan they had driven their canoes night and day up through Ishimanikuagan Lake and Ishimanikuagan River, formed a junction with his own fur brigade upon Mistinik Lake and held on up the feeders of Mistinik past the headwaters of the Pipishikau and Mossy Pine Rivers for the Height of Land.

And there, from the jumbled chain of waters that links Summit Lake upon the Height of Land with Lake Kaniapiskau, to the northward upon the great Central Plateau, they had bored eastward through shallow upland sloughs and portaged over barren stretches of rocky tableland till they made the feeble streamlets that constitute the source of Sandy Lake.

Up through Sandy Lake they had traveled and up Sandy River to strike the Kaniapiskau River at the Lower Gorge. Here upon the main artery of the hinterland there was only the mouth of the Goodwood River to pass and the bad stretch of white water at Granite Fall round which to portage, and Cambrian Lake, their goal, lay a few miles farther on.

With that goal in sight, as it were, it griped Dubawni to realize that his way was barred upon the last portage and that to win the last few miles of his traverse he and Ivan Trevor must match their one hundred and forty-odd men against double or perhaps triple that number.

"*Diable!*" he gritted. "Does it not drive you crazy with rage to think that the *canaille* had the skill and wit and cunning to head us here?"

"Aye!" boomed Ivan somberly. "But it is no fault of ours. We did our best, and we could not travel any farther northward without taking the Kaniapiskau for it. Helbaud knew that. When he failed to intercept us at the Height of Land, he could not help but know we were taking a devious route. Likewise he could not help but know we must pass Granite Fall to enter Cambrian Lake. For he is no tyro in the land, you will be remembering, Dubawni, and we are pitted against no coward and no fool.

"We have done our best to save our men and keep Masita from harm, and therefore our conscience will be crystal clear. As for the rest, it is in the hands of Heffen. We will be looking for the solution there, and, forbye, man, it may be that we shall find the solutions of many things. So, be stooping low, Dubawni, while we make a run for François's cover!"

CHAPTER XX

BAYED

WITH a low-crouching rush the two men crossed the intervening space of rock and dived into the trench-like depression that sheltered Lavergne and Masita. A spatter of bullets sprinkled all about them, but none found the mark, and François pumped back rapidly to cover their coming.

"Fair grand!" exulted Ivan, as they slid down between the brigade-leader and the girl. "Come what will, all the men are

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under cover like ourselves, and in warfare of this kind, cover, I am thinking, will be counting for much. Is yon Helbaud on the river side still, François?"

"Yes, yes," put in Masita, who, her cheeks aglow with excitement and her dark eyes flashing, was peering riskily over the edge of the natural parapet of rock. "I see him. I see the dog, the scoundrel! Look, father, look! *Mon Dieu*, see his host of men! He must have brought his whole half-thousand from Manikuagan Portage."

"Hardly, *petite*, hardly," amended Dubawni; "but by the way he moves them to ring us on all sides there must be between three and four hundred. And you, keep down! You bring us no gain by looking over, and it might be that a ball intended for one of us would find you. Do not raise your head."

He placed a huge brown hand on top of her purple-black hair to ensure obedience and himself raised his squat, wide-shouldered frame till he could breast the sloping edge of the rock-ditch and shove his rifle forward alongside those of the factor and Lavergne.

A full mile away and slinking as swift as wraiths from rock to rock along the edge of the foaming cataract and the white smother of bad rapids below, they could mark the Arctic Fur men, Helbaud's hirelings and recruits of the opportune moment, his scum of the Gulf ports, his offscourings of the seas, his Iroquois Indians, Montagnais Indians, hard-bitten wreckers of Anticosti and Sable Island, outlawed sealers and fishermen from far Newfoundland, St. Pierre and Miquelon.

These had hounded a long way, but their game was bayed at last, and with rapid, certain, decisive movements they occupied at Helbaud's direction the rear gap of the portage behind the forces of Ivan and Dubawni and also the flat of the little plateau to the westward.

Cut off from advance to the Kaniapiskau River ahead, cut off from retreat to it in the rear, shut away from it on the side of Granite Fall and hemmed in from the flat plateau to the westward, the one hundred and forty-odd men claiming allegiance to two different companies, but temporarily united against a common danger, lay marooned, so to speak, upon an island of rock in the sea of their enemies.

Upon them from all four sides advance was easy, and the only saving grace they had was the trench-like chasm that ran irregularly through the rocky island they occupied. This azoic split, ripped open in some ancient day by volcanic action, was a mitral-shaped slash, its arms extending approximately east and west, with a third cleft leading some distance northward from the angle of the miter.

Ivan, Dubawni, Lavergne and Masita had taken shelter just at the angle. In the cleft leading northward the combined Hudson's Bay Company and Free-Trading forces were huddled so closely as to hamper each other's defensive work, and in the full of the firing that accompanied Helbaud's disposition of his hundreds the Chimo factor left the other three and began crawling along the bottom of the northerly cleft.

"Sachelle! Chakoni!" he called as he wriggled up behind the packed mass of men. "Be coming out, whereffer you are. Aye, and Dubawni's brigade leader Chambonne also. Be hurrying, you three!"

The black-bearded, thick-set chief trader, the tall, lithe Nascaupee Fort runner and the big, pure-blooded, hawk-nosed, heavy-mustached Frenchman Chambonne wormed out of the press and half crouched on one knee before him.

"Men," criticized Ivan, "you will be getting small action yarded up like moose in Winter. Chambonne, keep forty of your men and hold this northerly cleft. Sachelle, take half of the remainder and man yon westerly slash, and you, Chakoni, string the other half along the easterly one.

"Go down on your bellies, all, till you get into position. Chambonne commands at the far end, Sachelle on the left, Chakoni on the right, Lavergne at the angle of the center, while Dubawni and I direct the whole line of battle. And I will be asking just one question before you go. What about the canoes and packs I see jammed in the cleft, is it that I am seeing them all?"

"Ba gar," answered Sachelle, "I'm couldn't be save but four canoes an' mebbe half de packs."

"And I," confessed Chambonne, with patent chagrin, "could get only two crafts under cover. You see, my men were leading. We got Helbaud's salute first and a much warmer, closer salute than you got at the rear. Two canoes is all, and never a pack in the mob. For who can shoot with a pile of dunnage on his neck?"

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"Six canoes," totaled the Nascaupee Fort runner Chakoni. "Factor, six is plenty to carry the men who will go forth out of this trap. There is death a-wing, and lucky you may be called if you have enough to fill six crafts after the fight."

"Aye, Chakoni," nodded Ivan with ponderous brooding. "I am thinking you are right. Bald it sounds and all, but our men and Dubawni's men are not of the breed to cringe from grim facts and plain speech. And see that the canoes come to no damage. Our lives may be staked on their condition, forbye, should the occasion to chance a dash with them arise. Also be hoarding the food. Waste not an infinitesimal scrap. For I am not yet knowing the intentions of this tefflish upstart, Helbaud. It may be a storming charge, or then again it may be a vise-like siege. So be keeping that in mind, and now to your places, all!"

Immediately the congested northerly cleft thinned out, Sachelle leading his quota crawling to the left, Chakoni his quota to the right, and leaving Chambonne room with his forty men to take up their positions of defense.

Ivan himself had barely got back to Dubawni and the others at the central angle when a loud shout arose on the river side. Looking over the parapet, he and the other men saw Helbaud alone upon a boulder with a white flag in his hand. Waving the flag, he advanced to within a couple of hundred yards of their position, and with a snarl Ivan Trevor leaped out onto the edge of his trench.

"Man, man!" he thundered, his voice vibrating with passion. "Be stopping right there. Be warned in time and be stopping right there. You have felt the weight of my restrained fist once, forbye, upon the Manikuagan beach, and the next time, by Heffen, there will be no restraint! Put the dirty white rag in your pocket and show us your heels. We are by no manner of means parleying with whelps like you.

"'Fore God, did Dubawni not hear you boast in your Manikuagan council-hall that you would smash us both? Did he not see you drink your toast to the passing of the Free-Traders and the ancient and honorable Company of Adventurers? *My* company, you tefflish intriguer! And you will not be coming to me under any banner, white, black or motley, but I will be going to you at the time appointed under the blood-red banner of my sovereignty.

"You are hearing me? Jam the white rag in your pocket, I am saying, and you get back to your men and your arms. Down on Manikuagan beach we were but revealing to you a few playful buffets, but here, by Heffen, we will be showing you a man-size fight!"

CHAPTER XXI

THE NIGGARD NORTH

"MON DIEU!" cried Masita in admiration, as, watching from the trench, they saw Helbaud turn abruptly back to the river. "Has the factor not a burning, shriveling tongue? Even more fiery than yours, father, and that is saying much! What a rage Helbaud will be in! I fancy I can see his bold eyes snapping and his face screwing itself up till his sharp-pointed mustaches quiver like the whiskers of a cat. Ha, he drops down to the water's edge and waves his fist venomously as he drops! If I mistake not, the factor will not have long to wait for his man-size fight. Father, in the name of my mother, find me a rifle before they come."

"No, Masita, no!" refused Dubawni in alarm. "You will keep under cover, and you will take no part."

"But, *mon Dieu!*" stormed Masita, "have you forgotten how he thought to drag me before a priest that night on the Manikuagan?"

"No," returned Dubawni grimly, "I have not forgotten, and if the chance comes, I will show the *canaille* that things stick well in my memory. But leave it all to me. What there is to be done I will do."

"Yes," nodded the massive Lavergne, ejecting the empty shell after a high-sighted shot at the point where Hillaire Helbaud had disappeaerd, "and if you find too much to be done, I shall take a hand and help."

"François, François," wheedled Masita in a whisper. "My father will not give me a weapon, but you, you will let me press trigger once? Just once, François. *Mon Dieu*, have you forgotten these days we have been journeying northward together? You have been swearing all sorts of vows, and it is little I ask now. You will let me shoot one shot, at the time I myself shall choose?"

"Maybe," assented Lavergne, pressing the impetuous hand upon his arm. "If I do

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not need all my shells myself! Who can tell?"

"Aye, who can be telling?" echoed the factor, his keen glance interpreting Masita's pleading attitude as he slipped back into the rocky trench beside them. "And, girl, I am thinking you can be of greater use as a nurse than as a fighter. Neffer fear, you will be having your hands full at that, if I am any prophet whateffer!"

IN THE wild days that followed, the factor's prophecy came true.

Masita had her hands full, and many a first-aid task those hands performed, and many a gruesome sight her girlish eyes beheld.

Truly it was a man-size fight, but to the Hudson's Bay and Free-Trading forces the bitter physical conflict was as nothing compared to the spectral enemies they fought within their own ranks.

After the first day they were almost without water, and it was not many days till their food ran out.

Taking toll of the forest and the stream as they journeyed swiftly north, they had been able to accumulate but little reserve meat, and the most of this was in the packs that had been lost in the scramble for cover at Helbaud's sudden attack. Their position began to be desperate, and the factor held council with Dubawni, Lavergne, Sachelle and the rest as to the advisability of attempting a break through the ring that held them.

"Are you counseling it?" he asked. "Some of us may be getting through, and then again none of us may be getting through. What are you thinking about it?"

"*Ciel*, yes," growled the impetuous Dubawni. "Let us take the canoes and make a run for it. Here we are of mornings licking the damp rocks for drops to cool our parched tongues. A man can not live long on dew, so it is better to make a dash than to die of hunger and thirst."

Sachelle, Chambonne and Chakoni nodded their assent, but Lavergne spoke out in protest.

"It is madness," he pointed out. "There is death in the air, and lead travels faster than feet can run. Nobody can live in the face of rifle fire on this bare rock. And could we live to reach Helbaud's rock barricades, we would not cross them, for bullets would cut us down like reeds before the knife. Factor, you have listened to my advice before. Listen to it now, and in the end you shall go free out of this trap. Hang on here till the end of the week."

"Aye, François," boomed Ivan somberly, "effer you have given good advice, and you speak stark truth. I am thinking myself the dash means death. So we will be waiting—a week."

Grimly they waited, and ever through the golden early August days winged death spanned the gap between their own and the Arctic Fur trenches; ever in the star-strewn void of the northern nights the fires glared, and the crack of rifles and the cries of fighting men echoed forth as Helbaud rolled up his barricades of loose rock closer and closer. Continually the factor held council and turned anxious eyes upon the adamant, imperturbable Lavergne, striving to fathom the brigade-leader's mind, but he could not pierce François's impassiveness.

"Wait!" was the stoic counsel that always prevailed. "Factor, wait till the week runs out."

Continually on both sides the death list mounted up.

Never a day or a night passed that Ivan's mooseskin-bound Bible was not read over some Hudson's Bay or Free-Trading man, cached away under a cairn of stones in the gut of the trenches.

Dubawni's brigade-leader Chambonne fell one midnight with a ball in his forehead as he peered over the parapet, and Dubawni fainted under Masita's frantic eyes with a glancing missile in the fleshy part of his thigh.

Whereupon many demanded the forlorn chance of the rush.

"But wait!" counseled Lavergne. "We can always make a dash, but the moment we chance all on a dash we are done with waiting."

Starvation made itself manifest.

Emaciated grew the faces of Ivan's Seven Islands, Moisie, Mingan and Romaine men, and of Dubawni's Frenchmen, Quebec Ojibways and James Bay Crees. In agony and despair the Free-Trader himself writhed upon a pair of empty pack-sacks, watching the wan-featured Masita ministering as best she could and trying to soothe the wounded ones whose swollen tongues cried out for water.

Huddled in that charnel pit in the azoic waste, they felt, beyond the harassing power

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of Helbaud, the terrific, ruthless, stunning power of the North which filled the crimson-and-gold Autumnal world on all sides of them with teeming life, but which held to them for sustenance only the dry dugs of a stony breast. Beyond their gory amphitheater they could mark the winnowing butterflies sucking honeyed flowers, the roaming black fox hunting ptarmigan in the green woods, the osprey striking down from midair at the namaycush in the stream.

Close to the Northland's flinty heart they struggled, but that flinty heart gave no sign.

Dead bodies might thud upon it and fester there in the blazing sun amid a scavenging cloud of mosquitoes; night and day the incoherencies of the wounded and the cursing of the starving, thirsting defenders might go up, but the niggard North seemed to quicken with no emotion and turn no hearkening ear.

Men cried out against the discrimination which denied them one sip of honey that the wasteful butterfly spilled, one unfinished bone that the foraging black fox left, one atom of roe that the osprey squeezed from the struggling fish in its claws.

They cried out and, half-demented but resolved to either break free or die, they rose up the seventh dawn, a dawn filled with the first white-frost fog of fall, and began to breast themselves over the trench edges.

"But wait, you fools!" commanded Lavergne, his hands upon their shoulders pulling them back. "Wait a little and all your waiting is done. Look—the caribou are coming!"

Their haggard eyes followed the pointing of his bronzed finger, and looming darkly in the eddying fog on the plateau, they sighted the vanguard of the migrating caribou swinging on their yearly journey from west to east.

"Man," demanded Ivan Trevor amazed, "is there magic in you?"

"Only memory," replied Lavergne. "In the days I used to hunt with the Barren Grounds Tribe, here was the caribous' crossing-place and here we took our toll. When we sought cover for the first, I saw by the signs that they had not passed this year. It was the season. The migration never fails. Therefore they would come if we waited. It was the reason of my counsel, and now we have meat, drink and a screen for flight."

For the North that had denied them so long had relented at last; the North that had favored Helbaud so long had turned against him at last.

Against that close-packed mass which trailed down, thousands strong, to cross the Kaniapiskau River, his might could not prevail. Wild shooting turned a few of the forefront, but the main body forged on, overflowing his barricades in a solid army and scattering his men to the forest to escape the trampling hoofs.

The chasm which sheltered Ivan's and Dubawni's men divided the host.

They went by on either edge, the solid rock quivering to the weight of their tread, and a well-placed ball from Lavergne's rifle brought one tumbling down.

First meat of seven days was the raw, red, quivering flesh.

First drink of seven days was the warm, spouting blood.

Strength and hope and the desire for life returned, while the procession still filed on.

From dawn till dark the antlered horde moved by, gliding in two living walls, and when between those screening walls the Hudson's Bay and Free-Trading men took their wounded and canoes down to the Kaniapiskau's edge and launched northward for Cambrian Lake, the migration was still passing.

CHAPTER XXII

THE BREAKING OF THE TRUCE

THROUGH the bad stretch of white-water below Granite Fall they ran with lightning speed, the factor in the lead with one canoe and three Seven Islands paddlers bound for Fort Chimo to marshal his reinforcements, and as the vista of Cambrian Lake opened suddenly before them, Ivan stood up and waved his paddle in farewell.

"I am bidding you all good-by," he shouted. "For this is no time for tardy leave-takings. I am not wanting to lose the start I have gained on Helbaud."

Again he waved his paddle and sat down.

Like an arrow his craft leaped down Cambrian on its long journey to Fort Chimo, and with the passing of the factor the full import of his new leadership fell abruptly upon Lavergne. He was in authority now and no longer as brigade-leader but as factor of projected Cambrian House!

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His old, hazy dream was fulfilled, and a sort of quiet triumph possessed him, yet with the feeling of triumph came a pang of pain as he thought of what the cost of holding that factorship might be. Involuntarily his eyes turned to Masita sitting amidships behind him, but she was upon her feet, her lips parted, eyes lightening, breast heaving, as she pointed to a huddle of log buildings crowning the headland which marked the debouchment of the Upper Kaniapiskau River into Cambrian Lake.

"Dubawni Post, François!" she cried. "Dubawni Post at last!"

"Yes, Masita, and we are the winners of the final race with Helbaud."

"*Mon Dieu*, yes, and I am home. Yet it does not seem the same home. In the Spring my spirit was in rebellion against its monotony and desolation. My heart was full of indefinable longings, and I wanted to get away from it all."

"And now?" he prompted tenderly.

"Now? *Mon Dieu*, it is home, François, and inestimably dear to me. Things are changed within me. The sight of those raw logs is solace to me. And still, and still—François, there is a little pain also. Your enforced antagonism hurts—I think that must be it."

"Yes," nodded Lavergne grimly, "you have said it. And that is what hurts me in the fulfilment of my dream. It hurts me, Masita, to have to go across the little cove yonder and build a rival fort right under your eyes!"

At the intensity of his tone Masita turned and looked him full in the face. Tears sprang up and blurred her vision.

"*Mon Dieu*," she cried, "I had not realized that moment was so near. Yet it is here. We are at the shore, and one must face such things without flinching. Help me out, François. I—I can not see too well!"

Gently he steadied her by the elbow as she stepped from his craft to the barren rocks, and there was a mist in his own eyes as he watched her walk unseeingly toward the other canoes from which Dubawni was disembarking with the remnant of his force which had survived the battle of Granite Fall.

"Father," she urged, taking one of the handles of the stretcher of spruce boughs which the men had fashioned for his carrying, "will you ask François up to the Post? There is no need to break the truce this moment, is there?"

She waved an uncertain hand up the hill where they could see Dubawni's small Post garrison dotting the palisades that loomed against the background of spruce upon the frowning headland.

"No, no need for the moment," agreed her father. He raised himself on his elbow and fastened his somber eyes on Lavergne with frank entreaty. "You will come, Lavergne? That you cross my Post threshold and linger for an hour or a day will not matter here or there."

François hesitated.

Now that it had come to the moment of parting, of breaking the truce and of assuming the former antagonistic rôles, an awkward uneasiness was upon him as well as upon the Free-Trader.

He hesitated, and Dubawni with something of intuition gazed with troubled eyes from him to Masita and back again and up to the Post on the hill.

"Dubawni," François spoke at last, "this is a hard moment. It seems as if there is some needful rite to be observed, some needful communion to be entered into after these days during which we have journeyed together under the bond of bread and blanket and shared hardship, hunger and death, but under the circumstances I can't go up to your Post. You understand? I would like to go. I would like to linger a day, but the way things stand it wouldn't be seemly and might cast suspicion on my loyalty to my cause.

"I am from this moment factor of Cambrian House and ruler of the district in the name of the Hudson's Bay Company. I have a trust that I must keep in mind. Ivan Trevor, you remember, went without a word. He gave me no admonitions to be watchful in my trust. He knew I would be, as he knows every Company's man will be. And though I could go over your threshold with a clear conscience and no danger to the Hudson's Bay Company's interests, I will not do it. And, as I say, you will understand. Both you and Masita will understand. I must bid you farewell now."

With a deft stroke of his paddle in which his crew joined, François forced his craft farther up the margin to where the Free-Trader had disembarked.

"I must bid you farewell now," he repeated resolutely, reaching out his hand.

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"And, Dubawni, don't fret yourself over the way things are decreed. Such things are not in our making, and we must work ahead as our hearts lead. And should neither of us ever gain anything else from the struggle, we have had those days of companionship under the bond of bread and blanket and been a mutual help.

"Days like those in a man's life do not fade quickly, and the ones who share them do not pass easily out of memory. I would like to say more, to pause longer, but it is only making things harder for all. And besides, the time I would spend might be put to the Company's advantage. We have outfooted Helbaud, and with quick work I can have the wall logs of Cambrian House reared up before he and his Arctic Fur dogs arrive. So I will take two of the canoes and my own men across the cove. Dubawni, good-by!"

Dubawni pressed François' big hand, and a tumult of emotions rioted in his somber eyes.

"*Ciel*, but you are a great man, Lavergne, a great man!" was his good-by.

"Good-by, Masita!"

The big hand went tremblingly across to her, and she gripped it tightly in both hers before speaking.

"*Mon Dieu*, François, good-by!" she choked and turned swiftly away.

Lavergne, his face setting grim as granite, spoke a command to his crews, and silently the crafts glided across to the farther shore of the cove to cut the first logs of Cambrian House.

CHAPTER XXIII

WAR AND WINTER

THROUGH mad days and nights of turmoil Lavergne ran up Cambrian House across the cove. Round about him the forests of larch and juniper shed their leaves, the frost-fogs of Autumn smoked the stark, gray land, and the wild fowl slanted southward with a celerity that foretold the early advent of Winter.

Against the menace of that ruthless northern Winter which would spare neither Hudson's Bay, Free Trading, nor Arctic Fur men, François rushed on the work.

Before Helbaud arrived at the head of Cambrian Lake he had the wall logs up and the outer ring of the palisades run 'round, and behind that barrier he proceeded to complete his work.

Nor was it peaceful work. These were the days, and nights, too, of assault and counter assault, of ruse and sortie, of ambushed work-parties and fire-scorched palisades. But steadily François held to his purpose. He checked the desire to carry the war into Helbaud's territory and raze Arctic Fur Fort from its site down in the bend of the cove midway of the crescent shore which linked Dubawni Post to Cambrian House.

Did he risk such a proceeding he might place his company's cause in jeopardy. So he contented himself with beating off the attacks launched to harass him and prevent his properly finishing his task. Did Helbaud's men succeed in destroying his palisades by night, he built them up again by day. Did Helbaud incapacitate any of his followers with wounds, he worked the rest double time.

And through these trying days it was ever a source of satisfaction to him to know that Dubawni refrained from lifting a hand against him. True, the Free-Trader sent out many a night expedition, but these expeditions were always directed against Helbaud. The Arctic Fur leader carried on guerilla warfare against Lavergne and his men, and Dubawni carried on the same sort of warfare against Helbaud.

Dubawni's wound had healed somewhat. From Cambrian House Lavergne could see, across the fast-freezing waters of the cove, the Free-Trader limping about on the headland, directing the strengthening of his already strong stockades.

The days were very short now. The Long Night of the North was rapidly approaching. Not a vestige of life, of leaf, flower, insect, bird or beast was in evidence. A desolation tenfold deeper than the abysmal loneliness of Summer in the wilderness, had crept into the harsh landscape.

Early Winter gales thrashed the surface of Cambrian Lake, shattering the young ice and cementing it into mushy floes which drifted like flattened bergs; but nightly the grip of the frost grew stronger, till finally the flailing wind ceased to break it, and hourly it began to thicken to a three-foot blanket of solid crystal, which would not move till the next July.

Then in the space of a day the Arctic Winter came down with its ramping blizzards. The land was an illimitable, rolling

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desert of snow, with off to the eastward the lonely Barren Grounds lying flat as a lid, shrine and symbol of utter desolation, dreariness and despair, voicing its loneliness in moaning winds that bore the bitter frost-sear of the Pole.

Ever Lavergne listened to those winds, and ever they found an echo in his heart. For in spite of his absorption in his task his soul was filled at times with a desolation as depressing as the spirit of the Barren Grounds, and he longed for the day when his reinforcements would arrive from Chimo and he could settle the competition one way or the other.

Even if he lost the battle, he told himself, that would be better than the eternal suspense and anxiety, the eternal longing and heartache.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE DAY OF CHALLENGE

AND MASITA suffered as he did. Ivan Trevor had spoken the truth at Granite Fall. In the hearts of Masita and François was the grimmest specter of trouble stalking, and there they were both fighting their hardest battle.

Jealously enough she watched Cambrian House rise across the cove, and also Arctic Fur Fort down in the bend of the shore, but when she thought of Lavergne pursuing his purpose to the grim end against the dictates of his heart, she softened and the tears rose often in her eyes.

Her immediate environment had altered quickly. Like magic she beheld the two rival posts rise, as it were, from the barren rocks and stand complete by Winter, ringed 'round with their towered palisades. Where but one lonely roof had broken the purple skyline of the Barrens, there now jutted three roofs. The roofs sheltered many men and would shelter hundreds more, as fast as dogs and sleds could bring them.

Her father's Free Trading men were due at Dubawni Post from the far outposts of the wilderness. More Arctic Fur men would flock up from Manikuagan Portage to Helbaud's aid. And down from Fort Chimo on the frozen Koksoak River, Lavergne's reserves were bound for Cambrian House.

And still with all this life and movement, with all the efforts of mere men, Masita felt that the spirit of the land steeped in its abysmal loneliness was not changed at all. The Northern world to her had grown luminous with Lavergne's presence. With his presence her home had grown very dear, but the change was in the outlook, not in the object of the vision itself.

Not so long ago she had yearned to see the solitary Kaniapiskau Valley peopled, to hear it echo with human voices. Now her desire was fulfilled, but not in the way she had dreamed, and saliently the meaning of it all struck home to her.

For never had man come to the primal wilderness without bringing his strife and his hate to ring hollowly in the Sphinx-like Northland's ears, and never had love come to a human heart without its accompanying sorrow and ache.

As she gazed on Cambrian House, the work of François's hands, she visualized it as the symbol of their lives, and the visualization brought a pang.

Only once had she seen him since the day he bade her good-by on the beach below Dubawni Post, and that was at a distance when with the chief trader Sachelle and the Nascaupee Chakoni he came across the ice, first to Arctic Fur Fort and then to Dubawni Post to throw stick-letters—that is letters stuck in the cleft of a stick—in the snow beneath the palisades.

Their letter, when opened, disclosed his ultimatum:

Dubawni Post must be evacuated by January 9th.

How hard a message it was to send Masita knew!

How easy a message to send to Helbaud, she knew also!

And in it was the spirit of François, the open, honest, fearless spirit. He did not come by devious ways and strike unseen in the dark. He served notice under his own name as Factor of Cambrian House, and gave warning in all fairness.

But although he served the notice on them, Masita knew that he did not expect them to obey it. François knew her father too well for that.

And as for Helbaud, nobody expected him to obey! The ultimatum only increased his activities 'round the palisades of Arctic Fur Fort.

Dubawni had already done all he could, and grimly he set himself to wait for the

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fateful ninth, while Masita prayed for the coming of his Free-Trading men in the meantime!

CHAPTER XXV

THE BLOOD-RED BANNER

BUT the Free-Trading men did not arrive, nor was there any sign of the return of the Indian messengers Dubawni had sent away before the frost to summon them.

Evening of January 8th went out in a blizzard that smothered the posts and forest and polished the lake-ice clean.

Morning of the 9th dawned, as much as a January morning in high latitudes could be said to dawn, stark and still, the new snows etched out by the stars and the fitful aurora. There was no more sun. Eternal night was on the land, but a night that flamed brighter than the ordinary day.

Under the weird, unearthly glare Dubawni and Masita stared from the top of their palisades for any movement of men coming along Cambrian's shore.

"*Par Dieu*, not a soul!" exclaimed the Free-Trader in chagrin, his white breath fogging the tense, frosty air.

"And this is the day, father!" declared Masita. "*Mon Dieu*, François flys his colors. Look!"

She pointed across the frozen cove, and Dubawni turned to see the Hudson's Bay banner run up the flagstaff on Cambrian House and burn blood-red against the ghostly hills.

"He flys his colors, father. Now the final fight is come!"

"Yes, *petite*, and look below—" pointing down towards the bend of the cove—"Helbaud snaps up Lavergne's challenge!"

Masita, shading her eyes from the snow-glare, saw a flag flutter up above Helbaud's fort, a black flag with the letters A. F. C. looming gigantic in white.

"*Mon Dieu*, he chooses well," she observed. "It is the color for pirate and robber. Truly the final fight is come. And father—" with a rush of compassion in her eyes— "why could not my prayers have been answered? I prayed and prayed that your men might come!"

"Never mind, Masita. Don't fret yourself about that. Helbaud's haven't arrived from the South, nor Lavergne's from Chimo. So I am not so bad off. What bothers me more than that is the matter of supplies. For, look you, Masita, they have the advantage of me. Helbaud can get plenty from his Manikuagan base, and Lavergne has his headquarters on tidewater, but I can get nothing except the little my men may be able to bring with them when they come. *Ciel*, it is a bitter misfortune that my Post garrison should have failed to strike any of the migrating caribou herds. It gripes me hard when I think of the meat that passed us last August at Granite Fall, meat that we could not put in our canoes and take with us!"

"Ah, do not worry about that, father!" comforted Masita, clasping his arm and laying her head against his shoulder with the gesture he loved so well. "The caribou saved our lives, and we shall manage well enough. And perhaps the Cree Post runners you are expecting will have had the luck of meeting with game. I wonder—*mon Dieu*, see—" pointing towards the fringe of green spruce on Cambrian's shore—"they are coming back now. At least, one of them is coming, and, father, I believe he has encountered game. For what else would he be dragging so heavily upon his toboggan? His blankets and his food-pack can not weigh like that."

Dubawni gazed hard at the koolutuk-clad figure of the James Bay Cree, bent double against the toboggan rope as he skimmed the shore drifts with his snow-shoes and swung up to the gates of the post.

"Yes, it is one of the runners I sent off by canoe before the frost closed in. It is Suag, I think. But I sent two, Masita. Wanipini, you remember, was the other. Can it be that Suag is dragging him? *Ciel*, if that is so ——"

Alarmed, the Free-Trader slipped down from the palisades and, Masita at his heels, rushed for the gates.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE PULSE OF DARING

VIGOROUSLY Dubawni swung wide the gates and scanned the man and the toboggan before him.

"*Diable!*" he growled. "It is Suag, as I thought. Suag, what has happened? And where is Wanipini?"

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"Wanipini," answered Suag unemotionally, "froze a foot on the journey from the Kenogamisi Post, so he travels behind with the rest. Your Free Trading men have gathered on the Machistan. They are coming down the Maugenuk River to Cambrian Lake not far behind me. You will see them before many days."

"Grace of God, that is good news!" exulted Dubawni. "But what have you there on the toboggan?"

Suag abruptly pulled the blanket off the figure upon the toboggan, and Dubawni and Masita stared at the swarthy face of a strange Indian whose wrists and ankles were bound with thongs of caribou-skin.

"A Montagnais!" burst out Masita, gazing astonished at the immobile face, calm as brown marble, and the unwinking, unfathomable black eyes.

"One of Helbaud's Indians of the South!" supplemented her father. "Suag, where did you capture him?"

"It was a good fight," announced Suag. "My bare hands against his knife. As I crossed over from the Death River to the Maugenuk River and came down it to the Kaniapiskau south of the lake-head to bear the news that your men were behind, I stumbled upon his camp at the Maugenuk's mouth. He was resting, I think, for the last stretch of his run to the Arctic Fur Fort. It was a good fight, for I knew that he was a messenger and must not escape. I could not use weapons, for I did not know but that he might be carrying word of mouth, and dead men do not talk. So I used my bare hands, and he used the knife!"

Suag moved his right arm a little, and Dubawni and Masita saw for the first time the red of blood staining his koolutuk under the arm-pit.

"*Mon Dieu*, Suag!" cried Masita, seizing him by the other arm. "But you must be wounded badly. Come inside!"

"It is the arm and not the breast," sighed the Cree, yielding himself to her hands and his load to Dubawni's hands with a wearied air. "But I am here, and I have the Montagnais safe. He will not talk, but that does not matter, for you will find in the pocket of the coat I wear under my koolutuk the papers that he carried."

"*Par Dieu!*" exploded Dubawni, as he plucked out the papers and scanned them rapidly. "Despatches to Helbaud from the Manikuagan!"

"What, father, what?" demanded Masita breathlessly.

"Notice of Helbaud's supply-train from the Manikuagan coming up the Kaniapiskau tonight! *Ciel*, what a chance if my reinforcements were only here now! What a chance if I had even a brainy leader to handle some of the men of the Post. But, *mon Dieu*, what is the use of thinking of it? Here I dare not leave the fort myself, for any moment Lavergne's reserves may arrive and attack me. And Chambonne is dead, Wanipini is away. Suag is wounded—bah!" He crumpled the despatches in his fist and threw them in the snow. "It is only tantalizing myself to think of it. But name of a name, what a chance if——"

"*If!*" broke in Masita, her face all crimsoned with excitement and her breath coming hard. "There is no '*if*'. It would be a crime against your cause, against yourself, against every Free-Trader who is speeding down the Maugenuk River to help you! *Mon Dieu*, father, we will do it, and I will handle the men myself!"

"*Ciel, petite!*" cried Dubawni, a great light illuminating his face. "You have the daring of your mother, yes, and the fire of myself. I had not thought of you. You have the brains and the nerve beyond doubt, but the risk, Masita, the risk to you!"

"Bah!" she retorted in his own exclamation. "What risk can there be? I shall take men enough to overpower the drivers of the Manikuagan dog-train and ambush it from the lake shore just north of the Kaniapiskau's mouth. Hurry and attend to Suag's wound, father. In our excitement we have been forgetting him. Attend to it at once. We have all the rest of the day to perfect our plans!"

CHAPTER XXVII

THE CAPTURE OF THE MANIKUAGAN TRAIN

IT WAS a long day to Masita, and one fraught with suspense. Any moment François might move what force he had against Dubawni Post and thus prevent her egress on her mission. Anxiously both she and her father kept watch from the palisades upon Cambrian House to mark if any such move was contemplated.

But the morning wore away and the short afternoon without any offensive move

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from the Hudson's Bay fort. Masita and Dubawni saw plenty of activity about the post, but none seemed especially directed against them.

Several times they observed men walk out of the cove upon the middle lake ice, peering northward down Cambrian's glassy surface, and it was evident that even as Dubawni and Helbaud were expecting their reinforcements, Lavergne was expecting his.

But by night they had seen none arrive, and in the period of dark that, although there was no sun to set, followed the hour of sunset Masita stole forth from the Post on the forest side, leading her men into the screen of spruce trees that crowned the headland.

There, out of sight of both Arctic Fur Fort and Cambrian House should the aurora flash out, they descended to the junction of the Kaniapiskau River with the lake proper and took up their position behind a rock-point that commanded the river mouth.

A screen of green branches cut from handy trees protected them in front from being sighted by any one issuing from the Kaniapiskau's mouth, and there they set themselves to wait.

Fur-wrapped as they were, they shivered in the intense cold. One hour passed; two hours. The period of dark that had fallen at evening was gone. There was no moon, but a hazy phosphorescence like a partially clouded moon smeared the low horizon. The cold increased as the night drew on. Masita set her lips against its cruel pinch, but her blood flamed warm through all her body as she felt the ice beneath her begin a faint vibration.

She raised her head and stared up the Kaniapiskau's clean glare-ice, glinting bluish-bronze under the smeary phosphorescence of the sky and under the leaping stars. On all sides stretched the pallid snows, shining white as a cameo as the sprays of the aurora began to sweep like a giant searchlight in the North. Steel-colored floated the clouds, scudding low along the skyline, seeming like ghostly, bulky battleships sailing a sea of snow.

Yet with all the weird radiance abruptly flaming forth above, the channel of the river was temporarily cast in purple shadows, so that Masita could at first make out nothing. Still the vibration steadily grew in volume till the whole river ice gave out a hollow booming, punctuated by the rasp and shriek of steel sled-runners grating on wind-blown shale.

Then like a tongue of fire, yellowish-green and ashy-rose, the aurora fell squarely upon the Kanispiskau's mouth, revealing to her a string of dog-sleds rushing at top speed, driving in a straight line for Cambrian's shore.

"Twelve," she counted, breathing thickly. "Garveaux—" laying a hand on the arm of the man nearest her— "Helbaud took a prize from us once. Now we take back a prize. Look, the sleds are fully loaded. That means one thousand pounds apiece. *Mon Dieu*, does it not make your blood bound and your lungs cramp? On those six tons of food my father's success may depend. Get ready. Pass the word. Not a sound till they are abreast. Then—spring out!"

Unsuspiciously the Manikuagan train swung on, each sled drawn by six huskies, hitched in fan formation and attended by a driver and an armed guard running on either side. The booming of their passage became a raucous roar. On all sides of them the surface of the ice split to the unaccustomed weight with cannon-like frost-reports. It seemed that at any instant a chasm might open before the sleds and engulf them all, but Masita knew it was only the thick ice-blanket accommodating itself to the equalization of pressure.

Through the deafening thunder she waited, tense, breathless.

Then as the dog train breasted the rocky point, she vaulted over the screen of spruce boughs upon the heels of her charging men.

AS IF dropping from the clouds, they landed almost on top of the line of sleds. Garveaux and four more sprang upon the driver and guard of the leading load. One or two rifles barked down the line, but the drivers and the guards behind found themselves smothered almost as quickly as their leader.

"Give in!" cried Masita, in the ears of the man whom Garveaux and his comrades held. "Tell the rest of your drivers to quit struggling. We are too many for you."

But under the flare of the aurora she saw the swarthy half-breed laughing in her face, and her swift glow of triumph chilled to apprehension as a second flood of men poured 'round the rocky point upon them.

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She gave a cry like a trapped animal and shouted for her followers to run, but the human flood was already in their midst, hurling them this way and that in the fight for the sleds.

In the struggling maze a pair of arms seized her, and the voice of Helbaud roared a great guffaw in her ears.

"*Mon Dieu*, dog of a Helbaud," she cried, wrestling in fear and fury, "is there witchcraft in you?"

"No, but lots of cunning," he laughed. "I knew your father could not resist the chance to seize supplies. That's why I arranged it and set the Montagnais Indian for a bait where your Post-runner would find him at the Maugenuk's mouth. Quit, quit, you little cat. There is no escape this time. *Par Dieu*, give me credit for my strategy. I have captured you with half your father's force. The rest of the Arctic Fur Fort men are attacking Dubawni Post. And my reserves from the Manikuagan, but a few miles behind the supply-train, are coming fast to help them!"

With a strident cry Masita struck him in the face with her free hand.

"Caress for curse, and kiss for blow!" he sneered.

With a sudden movement he gripped her tightly and went to force his licentious lips on hers, but midway in the movement he stopped with a jerk and raised his head in alarm, for high above the tumult of the struggle that was going on among the loaded sleds and snarling huskies sounded the war cry of Hudson's Bay men.

"Damnation!" Helbaud gritted, as the ice shook to the tramp of rushing feet. "There is the wile of the devil in you and your father. You sensed that staged stealing of the despatches as a trap and set another trap! You warned Lavergne!"

"What if I did?" defied Masita, catching at the opportunity to intimidate him.

"You cursed little ——"

But the rushing feet were upon them, Helbaud sprawled to a vicious blow, and Masita looked up into the face of François.

"*Mon Dieu*, François," she faltered, "with Helbaud I thought it was witchcraft; with you—was it your heart that told?"

"No, Masita, but my spies," François smiled. "We saw your Post-runner arrive today, so we set a watch to await developments. In spite of your caution you were seen stealing out into the spruce tonight with your men. It looked as if you might be going to ambush a supply-train or something like that, and if it was a supply-train, it was my duty to intercept it and at the same time keep it from getting into Free-Trading hands. So I followed you and stationed my men in hiding down the lake shore a little. You are not angry with me for it, are you, Masita?"

"No, no, François. If it had not been for your coming——"

"Yes," broke in Lavergne, "and by Heavens, I will finish once for all with this cur!"

He sprang aside to the place where Helbaud had fallen, but in François's momentary pause at Masita's side the Arctic Fur leader had scrambled to his feet and dashed up the Kaniapiskau's mouth.

"Come on!" he shouted to his men. "Save yourselves and leave the cursed sleds!"

"Now we have them!" exclaimed Lavergne. "We are between them and their post, and if we follow fast——"

"Don't, François, don't," beseeched Masita, seizing his arm. "His reinforcements from the Manikuagan are but a few miles up-river. Don't follow or they'll ambush you."

François stopped and with a word halted the chase that was starting.

"Then we had better be getting back at once," he declared. "Your men, of course, must go as my prisoners now."

"And I, too, François!"

"No, Masita," he protested, "the Factor of Cambrian House does not war on women. I shall send you across to your father when we come to the Hudson's Bay fort."

"*Mon Dieu*, you can not send me," she informed. "If Helbaud does not lie, half his force from Arctic Fur Fort is at this moment attacking my father's post."

"Heavens, is that so? Then there is more need than ever for haste. If Helbaud's Manikuagan men should happen along we would never get into my fort alive. We must run for it. Masita, you must ride. Sit on the foremost sled. Now, Sachelle—" addressing the chief trader— "take command of the train and drive like mad for Cambrain House!"

Down from the Kaniapiskau's mouth they sped along the lake shore and swung up the cove to the gates of Cambrian House.

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From the watch-tower above the gates the dusky face of the Nascaupee fort-runner Chakoni peered at them.

"The password?" he demanded as a necessary precaution.

"Ungava!" Lavergne answered.

After a brief wait the gates swung wide, and the tall, lithe Nascaupee greeted them in the opening.

"It is good," he nodded, as the long line of captured dog-sleds and the file of prisoners went by him. "Fortune has been with you. And there is need. The Montagnais dog has loosed his curs to besiege Dubawni Post."

Lavergne paused a moment to glimpse the dark ring of men thrown about the Free-Trader's stronghold before following the dog-train through the gates.

"Yes, Chakoni," he nodded, "and it is not the only place that will shortly be besieged. Helbaud's Manikuagan reinforcements are within reach. I had a brush with the Arctic Fur whelp himself at the Kaniapiskau's mouth. He set a trap for Masita, but he nearly got nipped himself."

In a few words he went on to elucidate the incidents of the night.

"So they will be here with a rush," he concluded, "and they will ring us 'round like Dubawni Post yonder. Helbaud will do his vilest to prevent Masita getting back to her father and to prevent my Chimo men getting in to aid me. You, Chakoni, must start down Cambrian this moment to hurry Ivan Trevor on with our men. Something has delayed them, but you will meet them between here and Fort Chimo. Pick the fastest dog-team and make a bolt before Helbaud gets here. For as sure as yon aurora flares in the sky, we are in for a siege."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE LIFTING OF THE SIEGE

WEARY and long was the siege that followed. Because he had two forts to invest at the one time, Helbaud could make no really active warfare upon either. His divided forces bottled up both garrisons, but he dared not merge those forces for a decisive assault upon either stronghold.

He was too much afraid of Lavergne's or Dubawni's men taking him in the rear should he make the attempt, and he took the safer course of trying to starve them into surrender.

And in this attempt the natural forces of the Northland came to his aid. A great blizzard came down on the Posts, snowing the Arctic Fur besiegers in in their snow-trenches and holding up all traffic on lakes and rivers over an area of two hundred square miles.

For two weeks, off and on, it blew with an intensity no trapper could face, and Lavergne knew that he could expect no help from Chimo till the storm had passed. Nor, he knew also, could Masita's father count on the arrival of his Free-Trading men any sooner. The Maugenuk River was a far worse highway for Winter travel than the Koksoak. It would be drifted deeper, and Dubawni's reinforcements were, no doubt, snow-bound somewhere above the Maugenuk's mouth.

But finally the blizzard ceased. Again upon the stark snows under the phosphorescent sky Helbaud's black rings of men encircled Cambrian House and Dubawni, Post.

Lavergne realized, from what Masita told him, that supplies at Dubawni Post must be run out. At Cambrian House, thanks to the captured supply-train, food was plentiful, but ammunition was dangerously scant, and it seemed that a second time the North had turned against them, as it had done at Granite Fall, and sided with Helbaud.

Then one night in the tense, frosty stillness came the chanting of voices off the lake.

Lavergne rushed to the top of the palisades with the sentinels, and quickly as he got there he found Masita at his shoulder.

"*Mon Dieu*, François," she breathed. "What is it? Free-Trading men or your Chimo men? But still it must be yours, for they come up the lake. My father's force is coming on the Maugenuk."

"Yes, Masita," he answered, "it must be my men. Yes, there they are! See yonder under the aurora! There is Chakoni in the lead, and the big man is Ivan Trevor. He has hundreds with him. Hundreds, Masita. Thank God for that!"

Then he cursed himself for the expression of pain that crossed her face.

"Forgive me, Masita, forgive me," he mumured. "I did not mean to hurt you, but you know what the help means to me—yes, and perhaps to us both! I must get down and have the watchmen open the

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gates. Helbaud's ring will not hold in the face of that advance!"

The truth of Lavergne's assertion became apparent the moment the gates swung ajar.

The Arctic Fur besiegers took one look at the overwhelming numbers rushing up the lake ice and then bolted from their snow-trenches, across to their fellows surrounding Dubawni Post. There they concentrated just out of rifle-range, and it was evident that a council of war was being held.

But Lavergne had no thought for their councils. He was staring with glowing eyes at the Nascaupee fort-runner, Chakoni, bounding up to the fort.

"Great Heavens, Chakoni!" he cried. "You have done well. How far did you go? And where did you meet all this help?"

"I went to Chimo's doors," answered the Nascaupee, "and we brought every man on the coast. Half a thousand strong they come, Factor. Cambrian House will not hold them, so I will prepare a bivouac in the palisade yard."

Chakoni darted on into the yard, and after him poured the huge fur-clad mob. Lavergne looked into the faces of Chimo men, George River men and Whale River men, men of Chakoni's Nascaupee tribe, men of the Eskimos from the outer North and men of the company's ship.

The yard filled up before him with packed men and dog-sleds, and, looming head and shoulders over every one, came Ivan Trevor into their midst.

"Factor, where on earth did you get the sailors?" Lavergne demanded, amazed. "The gathering of the others I can understand, but how did you connect with the ship?"

"I was waiting for her, François," explained Ivan. "That was the delay, and that let Chakoni reach Chimo before we started back. At your message I marshaled every man. Chimo and the coast is cleaned out, François. Efferything is staked on the battle here. If Helbaud wins, the Hudson's Bay Company is done in the Labrador. You are interpreting me, man? The issue rests with you. I have done my part and brought you your men. Be using them as you will. Chakoni tells me you have been doing well and captured the supply-train along with Masita. Where is the girl?"

"She was on the palisades with me—ah, here she comes through the crowd now!"

"So she does! It is a sweet sight to be seeing you again, Masita. And—" playfully pinching her cheeks between his great finger and thumb—"woful though your face is, girl, at the strength of my coming, I am thinking you may be thankful we have lifted the siege."

"Yes, yes, I am a little ingrate," Masita declared. "Yet it goes to my heart to know my father's garrison is only a handful and you have so many fighting men."

"But for the men you must be glad, Masita," Lavergne put in, "for they will raise the siege of Dubawni Post as well."

"Aye," nodded Ivan, "but first, François, give them a breathing spell. Let them eat a hearty meal over their fires in the yard. They have come far and fast and have not stopped to eat for the last eight hours. So feed them first. They will be fighting the better. And, I am thinking, a peaceful meal will not be distasteful to you. You look as if you had been snatching bites between watches."

"Yes, so have we all," admitted Lavergne. "We did not know what might happen. And if I hadn't seized the chance to send Chakoni away before Helbaud's ring closed in, anything at all might have happened. Things are at a crisis. Dubawni Post must be relieved of Helbaud's pressure before many hours. But I will let the men eat and rest till morning unless things take a dangerous turn across the cove."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE FULNESS OF THE DREAM

BUT at sunless morning Lavergne looked out under the glare of the aurora, which was blazing barbarically from earth-line to zenith, to see no man of Helbaud's about Dubawni Post.

"Masita!" he called. "Factor! Come and look. The Arctic Fur whelps have given up the siege and gone back to their own fort."

"*Mon Dieu*, François, is that so?" cried Masita, running to the gates with Ivan.

"'Fore Heffen," boomed Ivan, "they must have divined what was in your mind, François. In their councils they were interpreting your intentions, and they want to take no chance in the open. But look, yon's men coming out of the spruce now along the shore. Preserve's, it is surely not the curs returning for another onslaught!"

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"No," Masita cried out with a thrill in her voice, "it is the Free-Trading men arriving at last from the Maugenuk. *Mon Dieu*, it can not be Helbaud's men, for see them all dressed in koolutuks, snow-plastered from the blizzard-drifted trail. Helbaud's men all wear short mackinaw jackets. And see, they enter my father's gates, and the gates close. Listen to that shouting! It is their welcome, and my soul cries out to them also. François, you are not begrudging me my joy?"

"Not for a moment, Masita," assured Lavergne quickly. "Although it will doubtless make your father stubborn to the end, I am not begrudging either of you his men. And the arrival of his men explains the flight of the Arctic Fur dogs. Their scouts must have marked the coming of the Free-Traders, and they feared being caught between your father's force, Masita, and my own.

"But the shifting of the battleground suits me well and also allows you to go back to Dubawni Post. For I know that you would be with your father to give him words of encouragement whatever the outcome is. And don't fret about Helbaud. This much I will promise, Masita: he will never win your post as long as there is a man of mine left alive. I, myself, am secretly hoping that I shall not have to touch it. I am hoping that when your father sees how the tide of battle goes he will give in and make an honorable peace. Now you had better be running across the ice to him while the way is clear. I shall call Chakoni to go with you for safeguard."

"*Mon Dieu*, François, but those are words that make one admire you!" burst out Masita. "What have you not done for me?" She gazed up at him with pathetic eyes. "Oh, I must seem jealous and ungrateful in your sight!"

"No, Masita, no," Lavergne declared, as he impetuously caught her hands. "I know what is in your heart. I do not misunderstand. It is the tie of allegiance and the love of your father that binds you. And not you alone! Allegiance binds us all, and it has never bound me harder than at this moment. Great Heavens, do you think it is easy for me to plunge into the fighting, not knowing what moment my hand will have to turn against you and yours?"

So intense was the yearning, the longing, that permeated his words and flowed from his hands to hers that tears sprang to Masita's eyes.

Dumbly she gazed at him, unable to answer, and unostentatiously Ivan Trevor's hand stole slowly across their welded ones.

"François," he murmured, "it is too hard a thing for any man to do. Aye, Masita, I am seeing it is too much, too cruel to you both. Let me take your place, François. You are in authority here, and it is for the Factor of Cambrian House to lead his men to battle, but for all and all there is another way. You are interpreting me? Say the word, and I will be commanding in your place. You need not lift arms at all. You can be transferring your Factorship to some other post."

Lavergne's hands tightened on Masita's while her eyes searched his, waiting on his answer.

"No," he spoke out, "I will go through with the duty I undertook when I accepted the Factorship of Cambrian House. I will not shirk, though the doing breaks my spirit and consumes my hopes. It is the only way I can answer, and, Masita, tell me if it is the way you would have me answer?"

"Can you ask, François?" Her moist dark eyes swam with their old light of mystic dreaming. "Though both our hearts bleed for it, it is the way I would have you answer. You are a Factor, François, and you have fulfilled your dream. *Mon Dieu*, shall one be false to the vision and desire one has followed through the years? For to be false to that would be treachery to your inner self!"

"Yes, and treachery to you!" he broke out with a surge of passionate emotion.

"Yes, treachery to me," she echoed, releasing her hands and slipping with the stoically waiting Chakoni down onto the ice of the cove.

With grim-set eyes Lavergne stood watching her in silence as she and the lithe Nascaupee made their way across the ice.

The Factor of Chimo, too, stood silent, but he laid a comforting hand on François's shoulder.

CHAPTER XXX

SHEEP'S CLOTHING

ACROSS the ice of the cove Lavergne saw Chakoni stop, saw the gates of Dubawni Post yawn at Masita's coming. One instant he had a glimpse of the girl

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surrounded by a knot of men, and the next instant he exclaimed in amazement as he saw two of those men bound down the hill and try to seize the Nascaupee fort-runner. As their hands clutched at him, Chakoni twisted as lithely as a panther to one side, and without stopping his twist was off, racing back toward Cambrian House.

"By Heavens, I had not thought it of Dubawni!" burst out Lavergne. He flung up his rifle and planted a ball so close to the feet of the pursuers that they doubled like rabbits and fled back to Dubawni Post. "But still it can not have been Dubawni. Perhaps it was a mistake of some of the newly arrived Free-Traders. Dubawni himself would not set men upon one who brought Masita to him."

He waited curiously while Chakoni slid along the ice on his moccasins to slow down his run and came to rest at the foot of the slope before the gates.

"Factor!" he cried, addressing Lavergne: "There is the wile of the Evil One abroad this day. Before my eyes she went into the arms of Arctic Fur men."

"The devil, Chakoni!" exclaimed Lavergne. "Are you crazy?"

"Factor," asserted the Nascaupee, "I can not explain it, but it is so. I saw their faces in the gleam of the polar lights, and too late I saw her struggle against them."

"'Fore Heffen, François," interjected Ivan Trevor, "and we were taking it for welcoming arms."

"Yes, thus it was," reiterated Chakoni, "and the two who chased were Arctic Fur men. Factor, I say again, there is the wile of the Evil One abroad, and take care it does not set your Cambrian House hundreds at naught!"

"I will, Chakoni," declaimed François, "and at once. I don't understand how it could possibly be, but I soon will. Summon the men out of the yard. I'll throw a ring around Arctic Fur Fort, first to hem in Helbaud and his men who went back there, and then I'll see what this other mystery means. And the devil's damnation on Helbaud himself if he has found means to harm Masita when of my own free will I was sending her back to her father!"

Leaving only a handful of men in charge of Ivan Trevor to guard the palisades of Cambrian House against surprise, Lavergne led his force down the ice to the bend of the cove. Silent as a sepulchre, Arctic Fur Fort huddled on the shore. Not a man showed in the watch-towers or upon the top of the palisades. Not a light gleamed within, and not a sound came forth.

"Deserted, Chakoni?" hazarded François unbelievingly, to the Nascaupee who moved at his elbow. "It can't be. We saw men come back here, and why should Helbaud throw up a post only to desert it at the first sign of trouble?"

"It may be an evil wile," warned Chakoni ominously.

"A wile, with the gate half open, ready for over four hundred men to file in?" François put one hand against the barrier and swung it back on its wooden pins. "There is no wile about that, unless it is the caprice of a demented person!"

Close on their heels crowded the eager Chimo, Whale River and George River men, rifles half-way to their shoulders to stem any rush from an unexpected quarter, but the yard was as empty of enemies as the palisades. All about them the trampled snow lay black with what appeared to be discarded rubbish. Lavergne kicked at the dark litter, and a garment of some kind came up on his moccasined toe.

"A mackinaw jacket!" he exclaimed, examining it closely. "And another, and another—scores of them! Heavens, Chakoni, you were right! It was Arctic Fur men filed into Dubawni Post before my eyes. In koolutuks I saw them go in, and where would they be getting koolutuks but off the backs of Free-Trading men? I see that Helbaud has set one more trap. That was the real reason of his leaving Dubawni Post—to ambush the men coming to Dubawni's aid. I can see it all. A scout set to watch, an ambush by the shore, a hand-to-hand fight, the password choked out of a dying man, perhaps, and then the stripping of the koolutuks and the disguise in their own yard here."

"Even so," nodded Chakoni. "It was like the guile of the Evil One, and so deep was the guile that I failed to guess it. Factor, so near the Montagnais dog stands to winning! He holds the strongest post and the Free-Trader's garrison in bonds. Strike, or his mongrel may work some wile that not even your might can meet. Strike without halt!"

"Yes, Chakoni, without halt," agreed Lavergne. "Shove a torch into the flooring till the flame of Arctic Fur Fort paints

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the clouds, and his other stolen stronghold I'll level to the snows!"

CHAPTER XXXI

FIRE AND PILLAGE

THOUGH her eyes were half-blinded by tears, there was a cry of joy on Masita's lips as she darted through the gates of Dubawni Post among the men who swung it wide for her. But the cry of joy shrilled to a scream as, foremost of the the group, she recognized the face of Helbaud grinning at her out of the koolutuk-hood.

Like an apparition he seemed to materialize before her out of nothingness, and mingled fear and amazement struck her like a blow. She swayed upon her feet, striking out wildly at the hands that seized her, and a weak moan burst from her, but the inimical pressure of his grip brought back her normal poise and stirred her fiery spirit.

She ceased her useless struggles and drew herself up undaunted before him.

"Dog of a Helbaud, you have me, but you haven't Chakoni. He is too swift for your men, and the word goes back to François by him."

"Much good it will do you!" retorted Helbaud with a sneer. "Your cursed François deserves to lose you. He had not the wit to keep you when he had you. But I—*par Dieu!* I have the wit and the will, and here you stay!"

"Till François crumbles the post about your ears!" she sent back. "But my father? Where have you put him? *Mon Dieu*, if you have harmed——"

"Ho-ho, threats, eh? *Diable!* But though I am not to say squeamish, I am not the blood-drinker you think me. And there was bloody work enough up yonder at the Kaniapiskau's mouth when we took these koolutuks. No more for a little while—unless your precious François will have it. Your father is well enough. Perhaps chafing a trifle at his confinement, but well enough considering. He will yet make a good lieutenant for me!"

"You lie!" Masita screamed with an intensity of passion that made him chuckle maliciously.

"And you will yet make a good mate!"

"You lie abominably—devilishly! I hate you. I despise you! I told you once before what you were, and I tell you now: You are a dog, Helbaud, low-caste and black-hearted, and your end will be violent and bloody."

"As you like to fix it!" he smirked. "I know you are one of the North-born, and I forgive you your childish belief in forevision. But you will witness many a violent and bloody end before you witness mine, and you will have a good place for the witnessing. See yonder corner watch-tower? Well, your father is barred in there, and you can keep him company till I have leisure to come for you."

He drew Masita through the lower trading-room of the fort, the room she knew full well in the season of the fur trade, but which was now littered with the bound garrison of her father instead of with pungent fur bales. Between their prone bodies she threaded her way in Helbaud's wake, sweeping them a commiserating glance and a whispered word of assurance.

The familiar loft stairs led up to a vacant room above, and the door of this opened into a covered log causeway running to the upper story of the corner bastion, which upper portion was fitted as a watchman's box entirely enclosed, except for a small slide to see through.

Helbaud unbarred the door and thrust her through the passage, and before the great oaken beam had fallen in place on the outside of the door again, she was caught up in her father's arms.

"*Ciel*, Masita," he panted, holding her tightly, "but I have been half crazy these weeks. I could not know what happened to you. All I know now is that Helbaud ambushed my reinforcements and fooled me with their gear into opening my gates. I thought he must have captured you also, although he would give me no news of you."

"No, father, no!" sobbed Masita. "He did not succeed, although he tried. And I—*mon Dieu!* It breaks my heart to think that I moved you against your will to risk my capturing the Manikuagan train. It was a trap."

Rapidly Masita went on to explain how the trap had been sprung.

"He almost succeeded, father! But François saved me, as I have said, and it wracked my soul to leave him and come to you! Not that I did not want to come—but—ah, you understand? I have spoken no word before, but by the precious memory of my mother, I swear my heart is his.

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It was so in the old days of the Quebec schooling; it was so when we met him on Manikuagan Portage; and it is so now. It has grown upon me day by day, father, till the strain of it is more than I can bear. Tell me, *mon Dieu*, tell me, if the battle brings me to him, shall I be wrong in going?"

Moved beyond himself, Dubawni held her to his heart.

"No, *petite*, no," he answered brokenly, "if the battle brings you to him, you shall not be wrong. But look, the light—" as a red glare penetrated the open slide in the tower—"what is that? Something must be on fire."

They peered out of the slide.

"Arctic Fur Fort!" exclaimed Dubawni.

"Yes!" cried Masita. "François has fired it. See him with all his men!"

In a black stream they could see them running back to Cambrian House. Behind, a geyser of flame against the somber spruce, Helbaud's post flared like a Titanic beacon, lighting the cove like a brilliant sun and filling the heavens with smoke.

The early-morning stars went out in the thickening pall, but brighter and brighter gleamed the orange snow and the emerald ice. Around Dubawni Post upon the headland everything was as clear as by day, and suddenly without warning the pulsating aurora shot its beams through the smoky veil and painted all things a carmine hue.

"*Mon Dieu*, father," whispered Masita in awe, "it is the eternal Flaming Night of the North, and ever it comes as an omen. You have never seen it fail?"

"Never, Masita," he declared with the superstition of the Northman, "and it spells some one's doom. Look, the gates of Cambrian House are open, and many dog-sleds are coming out."

"It is François about to attack," Masita declared.

"But with dog teams? They can not climb palisades."

"Wait, father, wait. It is some strategy of François's. He knows there is no use attacking by rifle-fire in the face of Helbaud's strength. He works some strategy, I say. *Mon Dieu*, he has scores of teams. All that the men from Chimo brought, and the twelve Manikuagan teams he captured as well!"

Under the crimson glare of the aurora and the blazing Arctic Fur Fort they watched the Hudson's Bay men crossing the cove and massing upon the headland above Dubawni Post. They could see Lavergne, aided by Ivan, Sachelle and Chakoni, going about on the edge of the fringe of spruce putting unruly dog-teams back in place, apportioning the men to each team.

FOR a moment they lost sight of François, and then, abruptly, they saw one team break from the throng and speed over the snows toward the palisades. Like lightning it traveled, rocking like a boat over the phantastic ridges of the snow-drifts, and Dubawni took it for a runaway team.

"Unmanageable!" he exclaimed. "Masita, he will never get them stopped, whoever he is, and he will go to his death."

"No, father, no! He uses the whip. It is part of the plan. *Mon Dieu*, it is François!"

"Lavergne? *Ciel*, you are right. The red light gleams upon his features and upon the glowing pipe in his mouth. But, name of a name, what——"

Even while he spoke Lavergne flashed by their corner under the loom of the palisades.

In the face of a furious hostile rifle-fire from the palisades, he flayed his huskies on. Balls spat in the snow all about him, but thanks to his meteor-like speed and the slewing, rocking motion of the sled, he rode immune.

One glimpse Masita and Dubawni had of him, rising to his knees with a powder-keg in his arms. One glimpse they had of his hand clutching his glowing pipe and flipping it down to a length of fuse on the keg. Then they saw the keg with the sizzling fuse hurtle through the air against the post gates and François, still flying in meteor-like flight, dive over the bank to safety.

A stupendous report shattered the frosty air.

Amid a blotch of flame the gates reared up and fell back. The shock of the explosion slewed a length of the palisades out at an angle of forty-five degrees, and Dubawni pulled Masita back into the mouth of the covered causeway as the side of their bastion sagged with the falling stockade.

"*Par Dieu!*" he roared. "Helbaud loses!"

For like a thunderbolt the massed dog-teams broke from the spruce, half a thousand straining, drooling huskies, bearing half a thousand men. Four and five upon a sled they lay, Seven Islands, Moisie, Mingan

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and Romaine men from the South, Chimo, George River, Whale River men from the North, all mingled with the fierce Nascaupees and Eskimos and the hardy crew of the company's ship. Wild and weird in their skins and mackinaws, they rocketed down across the wine-colored snows, clinging to the bucking sledges and yelling their vengeance on the night.

Thrown into a panic by the unexpected breaching of their palisades, Helbaud's men were for the moment partially demoralized. Frantically they concentrated their fire upon the speeding sleds.

Here and there a man went off, and here and there a dog went down. But nothing stayed the demoniacal onrush. Huskies maddened by the flogging lashes, men spurred to the pinnacle of daring by the shouts of François Lavergne, whose team came back at a run over the crest of the slope, they bolted into the breach and spilled their human freight in the midst of the Arctic Fur men.

"*Par Dieu!*" roared Dubawni again. "Helbaud loses, and, name of a name, I will take a hand and help! Do not move from this causeway, Masita, till I come back."

Before she could protest, he had slipped down the slanting logs of the sagging bastion, plucked a knife from a fallen man's belt and plunged into the fray.

It was a hand-to-hand death struggle, and from the first Masita saw that Helbaud's hirelings were no match at close grips for the giants of the Hudson's Bay. Beneath the trampling, swaying horde the ruddy snows ran redder, and involuntarily she closed her eyes upon the primal chaos.

At the sound of the door of the loft creaking, she opened them again and shrank back as Helbaud, his clothes torn and smeared from the struggle and his face aflame, rushed in.

"Dog of a Helbaud!" she cried, too proud to show her fear. "You lose!"

"I lose!" His face contorted in passion; his bedraggled mustache bristled grotesquely. "*Diable*, I lose all—but you!"

"You lose all!" Masita screamed at the grip of his hands. "My father, my father—François!"

Down in the glut of the conflict both Dubawni and François heard the cry, and both sprang for the trading-room doorway and the loft that would reach the causeway. But François was the quicker, and with three strong leaps he was up the loft-ladder.

"François, François!" panted Masita, swaying from side to side of the passage against the maniacal strength of Helbaud. "Quick, the man is mad!"

Lavergne dared not use a weapon to strike, but with his terrific power he clasped the half-demented Arctic Fur leader bodily, tore him away and hurled him to the snow beneath the broken causeway.

Dubawni was leaping at his shoulder as he made the cast. He took one look at Masita's frightened face and the marks on her curving white neck. An imprecation rumbled in his throat. His somber eyes blazed, and knife in hand, he leaped straight down upon Helbaud.

The Arctic Fur leader glimpsed Dubawni dropping from above, and his own knife half-upraised, he instinctively crouched low on his knees and swerved to one side.

But Dubawni dropped like an osprey, and like an osprey twisted in the last six feet. Body thudded squarely upon body. The Free-Trader's heel stamped Helbaud's knife aside, his own blade sheathed itself in flesh, and Helbaud lay still in the trampled drifts.

With a grim light of satisfaction on his face Dubawni arose as Lavergne and Masita climbed hurriedly down from the causeway.

"Heavens, Dubawni!" cried François. "I am begrudging you that blow, but yet it cleans all scores and leaves you victor even in defeat."

"*Ciel*, yes," declared Dubawni, "it makes even defeat taste sweet. Now you can make me prisoner like the rest. Here is the knife."

Lavergne pushed Dubawni's hand away.

"Keep the knife," he returned. "I won't put such a slur on you as to take it. And see, Dubawni, you are too big a man to turn derelict here without vision, cause or allegiance. Your post is sacked. You alone of the Free-Traders stand literally free. But the fur traffic in the hinterland will be going on all the same, and why should you not direct it? I will make you a proposition. Here is the Factor Ivan Trevor coming from the conflict, and I think he will approve of any proposition I make."

"Aye, François," nodded Ivan, "go on."

"It is this," spoke Lavergne. "I will give up the factorship of Cambrian House if you will take it, Dubawni. Join with us, and the Kaniapiskau Valley shall be yours as of old. I have the chance of transferring to some other post. Isn't that right, Ivan?"

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"Aye, if it is your will, François."

"It is my will. Dubawni, a man is lost without the allegiance that stiffens the soul. And it is an honor to swear fealty to the Hudson's Bay Company. It rules the Labrador in all honesty, and you will come to love its banner as I love it myself. Dubawni, not for your own sake alone, but for the sake of Masita, will you take the factorship of Cambrian House?"

"*Par Dieu*," breathed Dubawni, wrestling in a tumult with himself. "You are a man, Lavergne, to make that offer, to give up the post. And for Masita—*Ciel*, what can a father not give up for his own flesh and blood. By the God that makes men like you, Lavergne, and women like her, I will take it!"

Silently François's hand gripped Dubawni's, and as Ivan Trevor's grip sealed the compact with them both, Lavergne turned eagerly to Masita.

And she, hanging breathlessly on her father's words, gave a little cry of joy.

"*Mon Dieu*, François," she whispered with the old impetuosity, "my father surrenders at last. And I, in the sweet days that lie before us, I surrender too!"

In the midst of the fire and pillage she upturned her face to his.

THE END

THE TRAVELING-MAN

By A. JUDSON HANNA

I

OH, WHO would not be the gay traveling-man!
All the girls laugh with him, all the men quaff with him,
Bellboys, conductors and waitresses chaff with him,
Whether in Rome or in Nome or Japan.
Who but a drummer displays such audacity,
Urging his wares with such grim pertinacity,
Who for a moment would doubt his veracity?
Talking in riddles or only plain platitudes,
Quoting 'most everything but the Beatitudes,
Who but admires his lightning-like attitudes,
Intimate, dignified, haughty or garrulous,
Never too easy and never too querulous.

II

Up to Calgary and down to Key West,
Quite indispensable for his utility;
Who would not grant him the palm for civility,
Native gentility and affability?
Who does not envy his wit and facility,
Master of pleasantry, repartee, jest!

III

Now, in this era of swift locomotion,
Industrial wars and commercial commotion,
Knight-errantry is but a fanciful notion;
It does not fit in with our present-day plan.
And so when the wanderlust grips, as it can,
An otherwise staid and respectable man,
He says, "I will get me some samples and rustle
For orders amid the world's hustle and bustle"—
A victim, you see, of the ruddy corpuscle.

IV

Then lo and behold him storm into the smoker,
And turn up his suit-case and shuffle for poker,
A prince of good fellows and paramount joker!
Oh, who does not envy the drummer his lot?
Who but a drummer could get off such glorious
Whoppers when crushed, but with bearing victorious,
Into the smoker he marches uproarious
Boasting of orders he never has got?

V

Then here's to the plucky and happy-go-lucky, free-hearted, free-handed, amazingly candid, orating, debating, vivacious, sagacious, persistent, insistent, ostensible, sensible, rollicking, frolicking, itinerating, and peregrinating, but non-hibernating, importunate, fortunate traveling-man!
He is built on a very remarkable plan,
The modern knight-errant and pride of the clan;
All the girls laugh with him, all the men quaff with him,
Bellboys, conductors and waitresses chaff with him.
Off comes my hat to the traveling-man!

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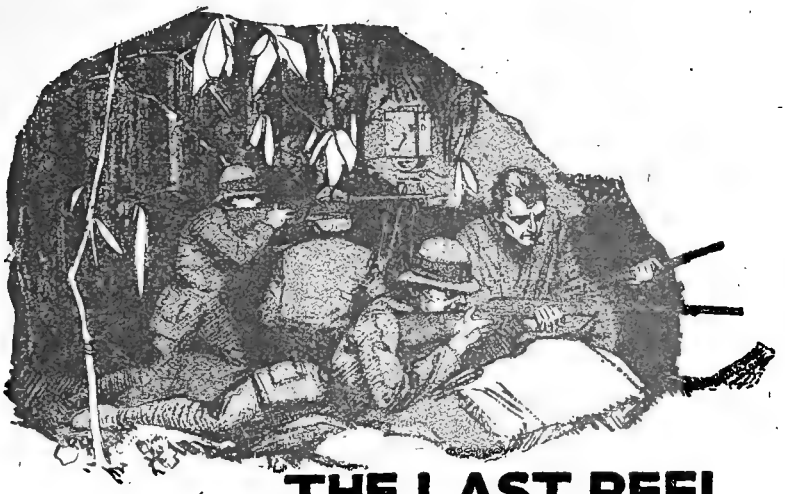

THE LAST REEL.

By George Vaux Bacon.

Author of "U. S. Spells Us," "Ideals," "The Unbelievers," etc.

IN THE Grand Hotel at Yokohama there is a bar which is famous for two things: One is the fact that the Japanese bartender there mixes the worst cocktails to be found in five continents; and the other is that a certain very famous war correspondent wrote the story of the battle of the Yalu River there, four days before the battle was fought.

It is an odd fact, but a true one, that men of entirely different castes and business creeds find one another more interesting than those of their own stripe. Thus it was that the stock-broker, who had come up from a visit to his son at the Standard Oil plant in Singapore, and the broken-nosed movie camera-man and the English artist who had arrived that day from Frisco via Honolulu on the *Mongolia*, found one another congenial companions, and after trying out one cocktail apiece with disastrous and distasteful results, tacked off unanimously on to Johnny Walker and stories.

The stock-broker told one about a man whose father raised elephants in Siam and who went "queer" while up the Penang River on a ruby pirating expedition. There was a woman in it, and ultimately, as is the usual case in Singapore, delirium tremens, disaster and shipment home of the more or less living remains.

The Englishman told one that had to do with the artist Alma-Tadema.

"I don't suppose there are many stories connected with the movies that haven't been tipped off to the public," remarked the camera-man; "but I know of one that I don't think you ever heard of—perhaps because everybody who would have gotten any advantage out of the publicity is dead."

"Go on," said the broker.

The camera-man produced a huge silver watch, looked at it absently, took a sip of Scotch, lit a vicious Japanese Government cigarette and said:

YOU know, about three years ago, pictures of wild animals in the jungles became quite the rage. Rainey started it with his African pictures, I think; then some guy took some showing the arctic regions, and from that the habit spread until there were any number of expeditions spending their time and thousands of dollars taking them. There's plenty of work in it, all right, you can bet, and it can be all-fired dangerous, too.

About a year ago, a guy named Livingston, who had made his pile in Rio in rubber, and had a kind of patriotic feeling for the place where he had gotten all his dough, got it into his head to finance an expedition to film the interior of Brazil.

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Anyhow, there was five of us in the party.

A fellow named Bill Harvey was in the lead. He handled the financing and the baggage end and a lot of other things, while I took care of three cameras. The plan was to take pictures of the voyage as well as in the country itself, so the minute we landed on the docks in the East River, New York, ready to board the United Fruit steamer that was to take us South, my work began.

I used up about fifteen hundred feet of film, altogether, on that trip. We stopped at a lot of devilishly hot, sun-baked places, where there were yellow beaches, forests in the background, and then mountains and sky like the places you read about in those stories O. Henry wrote. The population was always dirty and dressed in dirty clothes. I had been kind of hit with the romance of travel when I started, but after one or two of those places, I was glad to pass up the romance and give all my attention to work.

We arrived at Rio all tricked out in white with what Harvey called pith helmets on our heads. They were a great protection from the sun, and, believe me, you need it in those parts. A hot day at Coney is nothing compared to Brazil.

We didn't waste much time at Rio; but took a paddle-wheel steamer up the Amazon as soon as possible. The Amazon is miles wide, yellow, with low, muddy banks and swarms with mosquitoes.

I'll leave that part of the trip to your imagination. The next time you're on a day boat to Albany, just sit in the sun, close your eyes, invite the mosquitoes, and you've got it. The Amazon is the biggest river in the world, Harvey told me. I had a three-cornered argument about it with Jim Hawkins, my assistant, Tom Smith, Harvey's assistant, and a guy with big round glasses named Edgar Truesdale, who was the press agent of the trip. Jim and Tom said the Mississippi was bigger, whereas Edgar claimed that they were wrong. At this date I agree with Edgar. The Amazon is the longest river on earth; it begins at the Atlantic and leads right up to Kingdom Come.

Well, we splashed and tooted along in the heat for several days until the river began to narrow down a bit. It got so you could see the banks on each side pretty clearly. In another day the banks were in sight all the time, and in still another day it was about the size of the Hudson at its widest place.

One morning, we came to a place where the paddle-wheel steamer splashed inshore, and with Harvey in the lead and me taking a movie of the debarkation, we hustled our traps off the steamer and on to a rickety wharf.

There was forest everywhere around us. The trees were higher and thicker than I thought trees ever could be, and the darkness in among them was as black as the gate of hell. A kind of wet, damp breeze, with queer, heavy, dank smells came out from among them, and seemed to lie around us there on the edge of the water. The river wasn't yellow any more, it was black, and deep. The heavy undergrowth grew right down to the water's edge. There wasn't any beach and I got out on the moss, set up my camera and started to wind in a picture of the landing. Harvey had brought a bunch of natives on board the steamer and a big canoe and a flock of smaller ones, all covered with canvas. After all this had been landed, the steamer lets a squeak out of her little whistle, turns around and starts flopping back down the river again.

I quit winding, took the number of feet I'd used on my cuff and watched. Say, the sound of the paddles splashing just echoed and re-echoed back and forth from one side of that forest to the other like nothing I ever heard of before or since. The rest of the bunch with the natives were busy getting the small boats in the water. I stood there with the forest before and behind me, and the sound of the talking kind of being lost in the immensity of things, and listened. You know, a cold shiver ran up my back like I'd seen a ghost or else some one had poured a glass of ice-water down the back of my collar.

I know now that we were in the Poison Arrow country, and that in the twining undergrowth and under the low-hanging Spanish moss in the thousands and thousands of miles of forests around us, there lay the skeletons of any number of white men—some with the helmets and cuirasses of Spanish *conquistadores* still on them, some in molding velvet and lace of the age that followed, some in the khaki of the present-day adventurer.

No white man had ever gone into that jungle from the landing where we were, intent on coming out at the other side, on the slopes of the Andes, and had reappeared. They are all somewhere in that forest.

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That is, what is left of them is. I didn't know all this then; but I felt it, and it didn't feel good.

THE paddle-wheel steamer gave a last tootling whistle, and disappeared around a bend in the river, leaving nothing behind but us and a wake that quickly disappeared.

And then my heart stopped and bounced up against my teeth. Something jumped from a bough above me on to my shoulder. I ducked, let a yell out of me, and ran from the camera toward the boats. When I got there, the first that grabbed me were Harvey and Edgar. I guess I was as white as a ghost, and when I first looked at them, I thought they were as scared as I was, from the expressions of their faces; but in a minute I saw that it was laughter. They whirled me around and pointed.

There, sitting on top the camera, grinning and hunting for fleas, was the doggonedest-looking monkey I ever saw in my life. He looked half starved, was about the size of the big buck yellow cat that used to hang out on the fire-escape in the back of my sister-in-law's flat on a Hundred and Thirtieth Street, and had the bluest nose, and the reddest ring around its eyes I ever saw in my life. He looked as if he had just stepped out of the olio of an old-time road burlesque, and gave about as much of a darn for me, or my ideas as I do for a chipmunk.

Harvey was yelling instructions to Jim, who rigged up a camera, shot a roll of film in it and stuck it up in front of me.

"Get that monkey, quick, Pete!" he says to me, and, winding a crank being second nature with me, I focused and took about a hundred feet of the monkey.

After I shut off and marked the number of feet on my sleeve under that taken of the paddle-wheel steamer, Harvey started to walk up to the monkey, easily, with a piece of something in his hand. It was a roll or something, I think. I don't remember what the blame animal ate; but I think he would have preferred a slice of some one's jugular vein to anything else, though Harvey said that all monkeys were, like men ought to be, vegetarians, and said something about the length of intestines to prove it. I don't know how long mine are. I never measured them; but I know I like meat.

Anyhow, Harvey went out and offered that fiend in more or less human form something to eat. He walked right up to the camera, without the monkey making so much as a motion to try to get away. He had never seen a man before, and I guess took him for a specimen of his own species he had never seen before. Or else he was hungry.

When Harvey offered him the food, he looked at him as if to say, "Well, you're a fool to offer any one food in a world like this where it's hard to get; but I'm much obliged," took it, ate it, yawned, turned his back on Harvey, picked a flea off his back and flipped it nonchalantly into the water.

Which made Harvey laugh. You know, Harvey told me, laughter is one of the few things a human being can do; and an animal, with the exception of hyenas, can't, and hyenas haven't got a human laugh. It startled the monkey. He ducked off the camera and made for the jungle; but he came back again, after a while, when we put out more food for him.

To make a long story short, we annexed him and called him Beelzebub, which Harvey told me is high-toned for the devil. Beelzebub apparently figured that regular eats with no work attached to it was a cinch, and stuck. Harvey said he made a good mascot. I didn't like him much; but I wasn't boss so didn't say anything.

The boats were all fixed, everybody was doled out a businesslike-looking Winchester with a big pocket-load of cartridges, and with the big boat full of provisions following us, we started off with the natives rowing. They were Indians from some peaceful coast tribe. Harvey said they would go with us to a certain point, and then we'd strike through the jungle alone. I didn't like the idea much; but Edgar didn't seem to mind and I never was afraid of anything a four-eyed guy would stand for, so I didn't open my flap on that subject either.

While the Indians paddled us up the river, we landed every here and there under Harvey's direction and took lots of pictures. It was real instructive, too. There are certainly some funny animals in South America. There's the tapir, for instance, that looks like a cross between a black pig and an elephant, and the jaguars and pumas they have there—which both are kind of leopards—are the doggonedest animals I ever did see.

While I lay in hiding with Harvey and the

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camera, taking the pictures, old Beelzebub used to stick right with us, and kept as quiet as a mouse. He seemed to enjoy the game to a T. I got to kind of like him, finally, and would have let him sleep in my boat with me, only for his fleas. I made him stay in the provision boat with the natives.

WE FOLLOWED the river for days and days. I didn't like the nights much. They were scarey, and after a while we got to a place where parrots were, and they used to scream all night. There is a sort of owl down there too—I got a picture of one, one day, while he was asleep—that's got the most blood-curdling hoot I ever heard.

I began to get nervous and kind of irritable. I noticed it in the others, too. It was the heat, I guess. We didn't do much talking after a while.

One day, we came to a place where another river emptied into the Amazon. The river widened a little there. The trees were wider apart than usual, were not so tall, but were hung with curtains of moss that somehow always reminded me of a funeral. The natives ran the boats in, we got out, and they started jabbering to Harvey.

"This is as far as they'll go, boys," he said to us after a couple of minutes. "We strike out and follow this river, and after a couple of weeks, we'll come out on higher ground beyond the edge of the woods. Each one of you is to carry all the ammunition and biscuits, water and canned vegetables he can. I know the things that grow here that we can eat, and we can get plenty of meat with our rifles. Now comes the real trip, the real test, and when we get back to New York, we will have done something that no man in the history of the world ever has done before. No white man has ever walked through this forest and set foot on the outer edge. We're going to do it."

There was a kind of solemnity in his tone that got me. My breath sort of went away. I didn't feel very comfortable, and I looked at Edgar. He was lighting one of his last box of cigarettes. I knew press agents had nerve; but I didn't realize till I met Edgar what real nerve is in distinction to brass. He had it.

We unloaded the boats without much conversation, while Beelzebub sat on top of the camera I had picked out—we had to send the others back, and I took the one I found to be the most reliable, with the best lens and mechanism—and watched us. He seemed to be grinning, I thought. An impulse to choke him came over me; but I thought I must be nutty, and loaded myself with my share of the stuff. I took all that I could carry of Jim's in addition, as it was up to him to trundle the camera, which was going to be no easy job.

On top of the food, we strapped our rifles over our backs, took a canvas pouch full of ammunition, which Harvey warned us to be careful not to waste, and then, out of the bottom of one of the boats, he produced five long swords with a sheath and a belt attached and passed them around, one to each of us. I've never worn a sword, and couldn't see the use for one while I had a rifle. He explained that they were *machetes*, that he'd had them each ground as sharp as a razor in Rio, and that we might have to use them, at times, to cut our way through the thick undergrowth.

We watched the natives jump into their boats, wave us farewell with all sorts of unpleasant grins, and disappear down the river with everything that we couldn't carry with us.

I strapped the *machete* around my waist, as the rest of the crowd did, and we started out in single file, Harvey in the lead.

Harvey was one of those tall, well-set-up men, with a kind of lean jaw, a good forehead, and blue eyes that looked right at you, whether he was asking a favor or calling you a liar. He could walk like the dickens, and was a born leader of men. I'll always remember Harvey; he was a brave man and a gentleman.

Edgar followed him, loaded down with his typewriter, his traps and the rifle and *machete*. Edgar had hard going. He wasn't much on muscle, but the kid had the backbone of an elephant. I've seen him that tired he'd fall right in his tracks at night, with all his stuff strapped on him and fall asleep, and I'd have to roll him up in the light blankets we carried to keep him from being eaten alive by the insects.

Jim Hawkins, my assistant, who was a roughneck of the kind that, if he likes you, will die for you and only ask in return a shake of your hand to show you appreciate it, went next. I liked Jim an awful lot. He was a simple-minded guy and never tried to interrupt your remarks with any ideas of his own. I never let him know how I

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felt, though. It would have been bad for discipline.

Tom Smith followed Jim with some of Harvey's scientific instruments, and a couple of reels of film. I had four reels. We were all traveling as light as we could; but we were traveling mighty heavy at that. Each of us was loaded with 'way over seventy-five pounds, and that, mind you, where the trees stopped every breath of wind and the heat was like a furnace.

I was the rear guard, and, believe me, I kept my eye out for jaguars and pumas and things that might be trailing us when we weren't taking pictures.

There were plenty of places where there was good light. We got lots of pictures and used up film pretty fast.

And all the while as we marched, Beelzebub was with us, jumping from tree to tree above our heads, and swinging down at mealtime for his share.

In this way we took pictures for more days than I care to say, though some days we just marched, because Harvey said we weren't in the kind of place where the animals could be found. We lived on several queer sorts of fruit that Harvey said were good to eat and that grew all around us. None of us felt like eating much meat; it was too hot.

We lit a little fire occasionally, always in the daytime, and took some beef broth we heated up over it. Harvey was always finding water-holes and brooks, and we used the water from them to drink and for the broth. It gave the same effect as meat, and at the same time was nourishing and we didn't have to shoot. We didn't waste a cartridge on that march.

This lasted a long time. It was something more than a couple of weeks, and altogether, since we had left Rio, we had been out nearly two months. After a while the forest began to thin some, and we came out every now and then into patches of open country.

Harvey changed his plan of campaign about this time. We stopped marching by day, and marched at night. During the day, we lay around with the camera, patiently waiting for animals, keeping ourselves well hidden, slept about four hours after sunset, and then marched till sunrise. Four hours is enough sleep in that country. One day I reached my last reel of film.

That evening, as we had broken camp and were trailing along, all silent except Jim, who was arguing with me because I had put the last reel in the camera before we started and he had to carry the extra weight, I thought I heard a queer sort of rustling in the woods. Thinking it was an animal, I raised my rifle and fired in the direction of the sound.

I used to be a crack shot with the Iowa State Militia, and I guess I judged the place the sound came from about right. There was a kind of a whimpering yell, a lot of rustling, and then silence. Harvey had stopped; but I yelled to him it was just some animal, and he, thinking, I suppose, that I'd seen what I was shooting at, paid no more attention and we went on.

We hadn't moved a hundred feet when I saw Jim put his hand with a kind of funny gesture to the back of his neck and rub it.

"Say, that's funny," he said. "I've scratched myself somehow." And with that, he dropped in his tracks.

Beelzebub had scampered off when I fired, and I saw him sitting swinging on a bough a little distance away, looking into the woods, crouched as if to jump and hide.

Tom and I ran up to Jim and started to pull him to his feet, thinking he'd stumbled. He was like a lump of mud, and in a minute we knew that he was stone dead. I took the camera from the ground where he had dropped it, set it up on the tripod to get it out of the way, and with Tom and the rest, and Harvey running back toward us, began to look for a wound. When Harvey came up, he said:—

"What happened?"

I told him.

Without another word, he rolled Jim's body over, took out an electric flash and looked at the back of the neck. There was a little scratch there about the size of one that would be made by a needle. It seemed to me that a groan came from Harvey.

"GET into the underbrush and hide behind anything you can find, every one of you!" he whispered. "There are Indians around here!"

God! The sweat that had been hot and sticky on my skin turned freezing cold. Without a word we all ducked out of sight. The sun had set; the afterglow was over and it was pitch dark. We pulled Jim's body to one side, and left it there. I heard

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Beelzebub, swinging above us on his branch, snarling to himself in a way he had.

"Get your cartridges where you can reach them easily; have your rifles ready. When you shoot—shoot to kill!" was all Harvey said.

The rest of us didn't say anything. We didn't have anything to talk about and poor Jim couldn't. The thing had come so suddenly we could hardly think.

We lay almost in a circle, heel to heel, so that no matter where an attack could come from, one of us would see it. I lay nearest Jim's body. The camera looked queer and gaunt on its tripod in the open space in front of me. Up above, on the bough, Beelzebub kept snarling to himself.

I fingered the rifle in my hands, and ran my palms up and down its barrel. The steel was nice and cool. My palm was sweaty, and the cool of the barrel felt mighty good. I found myself petting it, as a man would a horse.

The moon came up, flooding the place with shafts and spots of silver, making blue shadows. One of its beams fell on Jim. His face was upturned.

Jim dead! He'd been a good pal, Jim had, and a hard worker. I kept petting my rifle, and I began to think about who'd killed Jim. I started to get restless. I got dizzy for a minute. I guess it had been the heat of the day. An idea began to come into my head, and it drove out every other idea I had. I thought of the four little steel-tipped bullets in the rifle in my hands. I thought how nice it would be if I could send each of them straight and clean into the center of the forehead of one of those dirty Indians that had killed Jim.

I rested my cheek against the butt of the rifle and strained my eyes into the darkness ahead, but I could see nothing. I could hear nothing but the breathing of the others, and Beelzebub snarling above me.

Suddenly, he leaped down on my shoulder and cuddled close to me, shivering. In a flash, the meaning of his act went through me.

"Look out," I whispered, "they're coming!"

Almost as I spoke, I saw a figure darker than the shadow kneeling in front of me a little to one side. It seemed to be in the attitude of a man blowing something from a tube like a boy's pea-shooter, although I couldn't see very clearly.

While Beelzebub shivered closer to me, I took aim slowly for the center of the kneeling figure and fired.

There was another whimpering yell. The figure leaped into the air and fell prone. Beelzebub shuddered close to me at the report of the rifle. I laid my cheek against its butt again and chuckled and had a good deal of trouble keeping from laughing aloud. I hadn't wasted a cartridge yet. The others kept silent.

I heard a tiny click, so small that it would have been impossible to hear it were it not for the silence around me. It came from directly before me. I puzzled over it for some time while I watched the shadows. Then it occurred to me what it was. Those Indians were blowing some kind of a poisoned arrow from a reed. They suspected the camera, and one of them had shot at it and hit it.

We lay there all night without another Indian showing his face. When day dawned hot and dreadful, with poor Jim's face already turning pretty badly and the dead Indian lying in the sun, we drew in closer to the underbrush—and there were plenty of insects there when the sun came up, too. We'd been too tense that night to notice them.

As it grew lighter, I noticed a funny thing. When I had set the camera up, after picking it from the ground where Jim left it, I'd happened to point it so that the lens focused exactly between us and the dead Indian. I remembered about the film that was in it that Jim and I had been arguing about. I figured that there was one reel that would probably never be exposed.

"What are we going to do?" I whispered back to Harvey.

"We'll have to stick here all day and watch—watch like the dickens. When night comes, we'll have to take a chance and run. I've got a compass; you all follow me. It's our one chance. We may get away from them——"

The words weren't out of his mouth when a little *ti-ick* in a branch over my head, and then *tick—tick—tick* sounded all around. The poisoned arrows were coming. There is a horror about them that makes you sick to the stomach. I hadn't felt it before. I'd been too busy thinking; but I got it that time. They all came from one direction.

"All face the same way as Pete, and volley fire," whispered Harvey.

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We all scrambled in a bunch and let them have the hot steel in volley after volley that tore through the leaves of the underbrush across from us and sent them whirling and dancing to the ground. Some uncertain cries, and more of that whimpering came from beyond the trees again. We emptied our first clips, reloaded and fired again. Then there was silence again.

Beelzebub, frightened by the firing, had leaped away from me; but came back in a minute, shivering again, and within thirty seconds after, the leaves in front of us vomited out a yelling, arm-waving horde of cinnamon-colored natives, that rushed us, blowing arrows through the tubes in their mouths as they came. I shot a new clip in my rifle in a second and heard the others doing the same, and we swept the first rank down; but another followed, and another, stumbling and falling, one over the other, and over their fellows' dead bodies, till my fingers ached with shooting them.

I felt Beelzebub gone from my side. There was a lull, and, without thinking, I looked around for him. As I did so, I heard a steady, continuous clicking. Another bunch rushed from the trees; I had one glimpse of Beelzebub. The monkey in an agony of fright, had leaped to the camera, and with hysterical speed was winding the handle that sent that last reel of film flying before the lens. He was taking a picture of the battle!

Then they rushed us. Five cartridges went out of the blazing muzzle of my rifle and I hadn't time to reload. In a flash, I thought of the *machete* at my side, and, drawing it, leaped into them. I was too close for them to shoot and had a chance.

How that steel went through those naked bodies! The lust for killing blinded me. I swung and struck and swung and struck and felt the saliva in my mouth begin to drip from my lips as the warm blood ran off the blade over my hand.

They forced me back with nightmare clubs that I saw swinging over my head. Some one was fighting at my side. It was Harvey.

"Back up!" he was whispering hoarsely. "Step back at each blow, and when I turn and run, follow me! The others are all dead. —— the devils! —— them!" His voice rang up into a falsetto shriek.

I saw him from the corner of my eye swing on a clubbed Indian, sweep his head from his shoulders, and then stagger and fall, a tiny arrow quivering in his throat.

I hurled my *machete*, dripping with blood, into the faces of the nearest Indians, and turning, fled with a speed that is incredible —fled into the woods, and sped stumbling and crying and screaming with rage and fear over roots and bushes.

The sudden panic that generals fear on the battlefield had taken possession of me. I ran and ran, whither I knew not, nor will I ever know, and the motive power of my going was a horrible, unbelievable and awful fear. The sweat poured from me in torrents; my clothes were dripping and torn; boughs had whipped my face and the blood was in my eyes; but I ran and shrieked aloud to the echoing forest as I ran.

After a time, I crashed face foremost into a tree and knew no more.

When I came to I was lying huddled up under a gigantic fern. My face was as raw as a steak. I had collided full tilt with a tree which stood over the fern. I raised myself stiffly to my feet. Three poisoned arrows were sticking in my clothes. The knuckles of my right hand were smashed from a club, one of my ears was half pulled off, and my nose was broken.

Three days later, after continuous traveling almost all day and night and living on the things Harvey said a man could eat, I came to a stockade in the foothills of what I found were the Andes, where there was a garrison of soldiers and a settlement of peaceful Indians and a priest. Eventually I reached Valparaiso, got into touch with my people in New York and returned home.

THE camera-man paused in his narrative, looked thoughtfully into a fresh glass of Scotch and soda the Englishman had ordered, and said:

"I am the only living white man, the only white man in the memory of man who ever crossed the country of the Poisoned Arrow Indians and escaped alive. That isn't what bothers me, though.

"I've traveled all over the world; I've worked under the best directors and with the best actors and actresses the studios have. My salary is one of the biggest in the business; but it hurts my pride to think that the greatest moving picture in the world was taken in the wilds of Brazil by a blue-nosed monkey named Beelzebub!"

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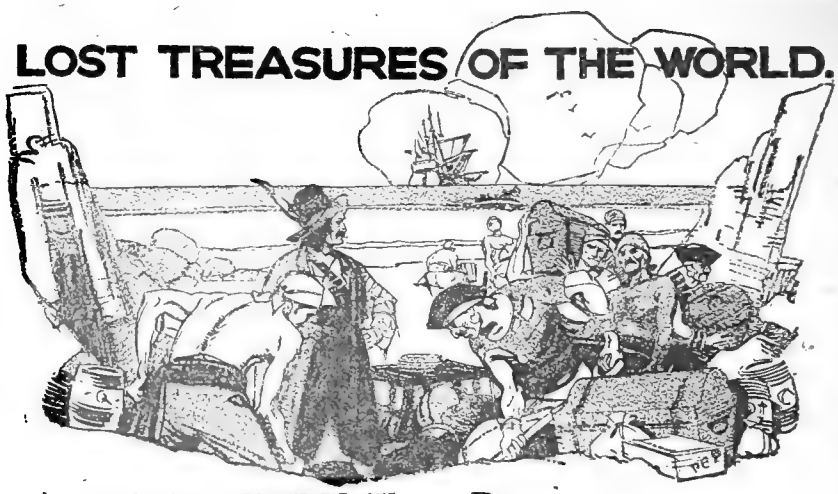
LOST TREASURES OF THE WORLD.



AN ARTICLE By Stephen Allen Reynolds.

Author of "61° N., 61° W.," "In Letters of Purple," etc.

IN THE preparation of this article on lost treasures the author has consulted hundreds of magazine and newspaper clippings, and scores of published volumes on the subject.

Many letters have been written addressed to persons at home and abroad—persons in a position to know the facts concerning specific treasures. In fact all available sources of information have been consulted in an effort to have the articles both up to date and authentic. Yet, owing to the very nature of the subject, neither the author, the editor nor the publisher can guarantee as authoritative these stories of hidden and sunken riches. On the other hand, simply because all responsibility is disclaimed, there is no reason to suppose that the accounts which follow are untrue. Naturally, were the treasures easily gotten at, they would all have been lifted long ago. The mere fact that a treasure has not been found is not conclusive proof that it does not exist.

At least a conscientious effort has been made to cover the entire field as thoroughly and reliably as possible, so that the result may stand in the future as a comprehensive reference on the entire subject of lost treasure.

To those of you who are less interested in the practical value of such a gathering of stray facts and half-forgotten traditions than in the romance inevitably attached to them, the following accounts will have strong story-value. In all the scope of adventure and romance there is, perhaps, no phrase more stimulative to the imagination than those two words "hidden treasure."

The ground can not be covered in one article, and there will come later the stories of still other lost hoards that may, perhaps, some day come back into the hands of those who seek.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

SUNKEN TREASURE OFF THE ISLE OF PINES

UNLESS familiar with Esquemeling's classic work on the buccaneers of our Western Hemisphere, few passengers on board the steamer which plies its twisted course between Cuba and the Isle of Pines dream that they may be passing within a pebble's toss of princely fortunes in gold and silver bullion, jewels and pieces of eight, sunk during the early years of Spain's rule in the New World.

The water is shallow, indeed so shallow that the steamer, in order to cover the fifty-mile voyage between Batabano and Nueva Gerona, must needs twist and turn upon itself to keep in the narrow channel which winds its way across the flats and in and out among the Mangle Cayos. And the water is blue and clear, and several of the treasure wrecks well authenticated—two facts significant in these progressive, inventive days.

On the submerged rocks and reefs, and in the dangerous passages around Cuba and Porto Rico, lie untold wealth—millions of dollars' worth of precious metals and jewels—and of this sunken treasure none looks more promising, more feasible of recovery,

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than does that in the shallows off the Isle of Pines.

During the early part of the seventeenth century hundreds of galleons sailed yearly from Mexico and South American shores to Spain, stopping at ports in Cuba, and then passing out into the Atlantic through the Windward Passage. For more than a century there was a close rivalry between the buccaneers and hurricanes of those waters to see which could sink the greater number of these treasure fleets. In many cases the records at Madrid and Havana show the approximate position of these wrecks, and in many instances specify the nature and value of the sunken cargoes.

A cursory research into the dusty records at Madrid has shown that within a very few years during the early part of the seventeenth century over thirty million dollars' worth of silver alone was shipped to Spain. In the latter part of that century the records show that the Valencianna mine of Guanajuato, employing four thousand Indian slaves, lost fully a million yearly through pirates and wrecks, this without in the least impairing its credit in European markets.

Probably the richest of all treasure-ships lost in the West Indies, was wrecked in 1679. A notable company of officials, ecclesiastics and citizens of New Spain were on board, bound for Spain at the invitation of the king. They carried the most costly personal possessions. The record tells of diamond crosses of enormous value, of massive ornaments of pure soft gold, presents to the king, presents that were intended to win favor and concessions.

Many tons of silver bullion in bars were on board, actually being used as ballast. But, many times richer than the foregoing were thousands of bars of gold, the property of the returning officials. Wrung from the sweat of countless thousands of Indian slaves, this treasure meant ease and opulence to the returning grandees and taskmasters.

One of the ladies on board, Donna Inez Escobedo, was taking with her an Indian slave as a present for her brother, who was governor of one of the Canary Islands. The few negro slaves on board were servile enough, but the Indian, whose name the records do not give, was unmanageable and grew more obstinate at every punishment.

One morning, when the ship was a few miles southeast of the Isle of Pines, the captain was startled to find that water was deepening rapidly in his vessel's hold. He was about to descend in person through a hatchway to discover the cause of the leak, when the warning voice of the Indian was heard to declare that the first man to appear below the opening would be shot.

Those who gathered about, heard the blows of a hatchet upon the bottom of the vessel. The horrible truth then dawned upon them that the untameable slave meant to avenge himself upon his captors by wrecking the ship with all on board!

The vessel was headed toward the nearest shore, the Punta Brava of the Isle of Pines, and then a negro slave was thrown into the hold in the hopes that his body would receive the fire of the Indian. But no shot was heard. The negro lay where he had fallen, stupefied with fear, while the blows of the hatchet rained faster than ever, and the water constantly increased in depth.

At last an old ship's officer, José Nuñez by name, sprang suddenly into the hold, waist-deep in water, and charged upon the Indian, sword in hand. He was followed by several others. They splashed around in the darkness, and finally found the slave under water, beneath a beam, drowned. The most frantic efforts were made to stop the leak, but the drowned slave had done his work only too well, and the vessel sank.

Laden heavily, overfreighted with passengers and ballasted with weighty bars of silver, the doomed galleon went to the bottom as if she were but a slug of metal. So fast did she sink that it was with extreme difficulty that even one boat-load of passengers was saved to reach land and tell the tragic story of the wreck.

In later years numerous attempts were made by the Spaniards to recover the treasure, but without avail. Divers of those days were never able to locate the wreck. But then, again, their apparatus was crude; means were lacking to prosecute methodical extensive searches. And so it was, that years ago, the Spaniards gave up the search for this priceless wreck of wrecks.

Just to the eastward of the Isle of Pines are the jagged reefs of the Jardinillos, otherwise known as the famous Jardine Rocks, where lies a small fleet of once stout ships. Here it was that the daring pirate Barthelome Portugues, lost the richest prize he ever took in his adventurous career, and for all

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that history shows to the contrary, there it lies today.

Portugues had fitted out a small vessel at Golpho Triste, on the Gulf of Campeche, and with a crew of thirty men set sail for Jamaica. Laying on and off between Jamaica and the Isle of Pines, Portugues and his cutthroats kept a watch for Spanish merchantmen homeward bound.

A large vessel loomed above the horizon one fine day, and in spite of the fact that Portugues had but thirty men and four small carronades, he swung alongside of the stranger. The latter boasted twenty guns and a company of some seventy men.

A bloody battle ensued, and when Portugues found time to count noses he learned that he had lost half of his own men in killed and wounded, and that he had a number of prisoners to care for. Setting sail for the Isle of Pines, his old rendezvous, the pirate started in to take an inventory of the precious cargo upon his prize.

Authorities differ as to the value of the gold and silver bullion on board of the galleon. One writer of the times states that gold and silver amounting to but $200,000 was found. Another estimates that the plunder ran well over a million; but, be that as it may, all historians agree that the prize was a rich one, that it consisted of gold and silver bullion, and that within a very short time three Spanish men-of-war appeared and took Portugues a prisoner.

A prize-crew was placed aboard, and with Portugues in irons on board the bullion galleon, the little fleet headed for Havana. While rounding Cape San Antonio a violent storm arose. The vessels became separated, and the one bearing the prisoner was blown across to the coast of Campeche. Then followed the most adventurous days of the pirate's life.

While anchored offshore, and the local inhabitants were preparing a gibbet upon which to hang the man who had so often ravaged their towns with cutlass and flame, Portugues effected his escape. Unable to swim, history relates that he fashioned a sort of life-raft out of two empty earthen vessels. At nightfall, watching his chance, he stabbed his guard in the back and sprang into the water. While paddling his way to the beach, the startled prize-crew fired repeatedly upon him—but that the Spaniards of those days were equally as bad shots as were their compatriots of '98, would seem to be established by the fact that the pirate lived to reach shore.

After an almost incredible tramp along the coast through the swamps—a journey occupying two weeks—Portugues managed to gather a party of twenty pirate associates from various camps and anchorages along the way. A small fishing-vessel was seized, and in this craft Portugues made his way back along the coast until he reached the anchorage of his late prize. She was still there.

Taking advantage of the innocent appearance of his fishing-craft, Portugues sailed boldly up to the galleon, his own men out of sight, and before the luckless Spaniards upon the larger vessel realized what was happening, the pirate chief layed alongside, and with drawn cutlasses and pistols he and his half-breed followers sprang on board. After a short and decisive hand-to-hand fight, Portugues found himself commander and owner of the self-same vessel upon which, but three weeks before, he had been imprisoned under sentence of the gallows.

Without waiting to clear the decks of the dead and wounded, the pirates immediately hoisted anchor and put to sea before any attempt could be made by other vessels in the harbor to retake the ship. Once at sea, the triumphant Portugues lost no time in shaping his course for his favorite retreat in the Isle of Pines.

But soon misfortune overtook him, for upon nearing the island, a terrific hurricane arose, and in his attempt to run the treacherous passage through the Jardinillos, his splendid prize was swept upon the rocks. Within a very few minutes the galleon foundered, but history relates that Portugues and some few of his men escaped with their lives.

Other wrecks are to be found upon the sea-floor about the Isle of Pines, many of them, no doubt, still holding treasure in abundance. But, out of the maze and tangle of these tales relating to sunken gold and pirates' hoards on and about the Isle of Pines—tales hoary with the frost of centuries, embellished and garnished, no doubt, with each telling—the two treasure wrecks foregoing, have been cited as the best authenticated, both as to location and value.

And there, beyond a doubt, they lie today, galleons of olden times, freighted with the richest spoils of the New World—jewels, gold and silver a-plenty. Not many fathoms

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down, unless the charts lie and old records be at fault, rest the bones of these treasure ships upon the sandy floor of the Caribbean, within view of a hydroscope, within working depth of our modern divers. Inside their oaken ribs remain undisturbed the costly presents to a dead king, the treasures of grandees of Old Spain, tons upon tons of gold and silver.

Shaded by growths of pink and white coral, pillowed amid beds of sponge, rests this treasure of bygone days until——

A challenge, indeed, to modern enterprise and ingenuity, tempting prizes both.

THE SILVER HOARD IN THE SALVAGES

GENTLEMANLY adventurers, cruising for their health, in search of sunken treasure or what-not, might do well to hark to the tale of the two millions in silver buried in chests upon one of the Salvages Islands, a small, uninhabited cluster, just to the northward of the Canary Islands. Documents pertaining to the case would seem to be authentic, readily accessible; furthermore—a surprising fact—the surface of the island itself has scarcely been scratched in an attempt to find the treasure.

Divested of its romance, getting down as nearly as possible to the brass tacks of fact, the history of this buried silver would seem to run as follows:

In 1889, Mr. E. F. Knight, an Englishman, afterward a well-known war correspondent during the Spanish-American War, organized an expedition to seek the treasure buried upon the island of Trinidad, off the coast of Brazil. He had nine partners in the venture, each one of whom put up one hundred pounds toward expenses, and were selected from more than a hundred enthusiastic volunteers. The cutter *Alerte* was purchased and equipped with one of the most elaborate excavating outfits ever placed aboard a small craft.

The cutter was upon the point of setting sail from Southampton when she was boarded by an old English naval officer, who was kind enough to tell Knight of another treasure which he might look for on his way to Trinidad.

It seems that the story had been hidden for years in the archives of the British Admiralty. Coming from such a source, the government record must be perfectly authentic. It seems that in 1813, the Secretary of the Admiralty instructed Sir Richard Bickerton, naval commandment at Portsmouth, to send in the first King's ship touching at Madeira, a seaman who had given information concerning a hidden treasure, in order that the truth of his story might be tested.

The admiralty order was handed to Captain Hercules Robinson, in command of the *Prometheus*. In due time, after touching at Madeira, Captain Robinson reported that "after being introduced to the foreign seaman referred to in the above order, and reading the notes which had been taken of his information, I charged him to tell no other person what he knew, or what was his business, that he was to mess with my coxswain, and that no duty would be required of him. To this the man replied that he was willing to give his time, and would ask no remuneration for his intelligence."

This seaman, Christian Cruse, declared that several years before, he had been in a hospital ill, recovering from yellow fever. With him in the hospital was a shipmate, a Spaniard, who died of the same fever. Before his death he told Cruse that during the year of 1804 he was on board a Spanish ship, bound from a South American port to Cadiz. This ship had on board two million dollars in silver, packed in chests.

When nearing the coast of Spain, a neutral vessel signalled them that England had declared war upon Spain, and that the port of Cadiz was blockaded. Rather than risk capture by the British fleet, and not caring to make the long run back to South America, the captain decided to make the nearest West Indian port that he might save the treasure.

Passing between Madeira and the Canary Islands, a small cluster of uninhabited islands were sighted. They proved to be the Salvages—mere specks upon the chart. At this juncture the crew mutinied, stabbed the captain to death, and steered the ship to an anchorage under the lee of the largest island. Thereupon the chests of Spanish dollars were broken out of the hold, placed in small boats, and landed in the arm of a miniature bay. Here, just above high-water mark, a deep trench was dug in the sand, and the chests buried.

The mutinous crew then put to sea. It

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was their intention to burn their ship when near some inhabited islands; purchase a small craft under some other flag, and then return to the Salvages for the two million. But their plans were destined to be never carried out; for, because of the lack of an efficient navigator, they were shipwrecked near Tobago, and but two were saved. One of them died after gaining the shore. The one who lived was the Spanish seaman who made the dying statement to Christian Cruse in a hospital at Vera Cruz.

Captain Robinson was convinced that the Spaniard had been clear-minded when he confessed to Cruse that he had been one of the mutineers; he felt also that the story of the treasure had been narrated in good faith, since the names of the vessels, commanders, and other data agreed perfectly with what he himself knew to be true. Furthermore, such a graphic circumstantial tale was decidedly beyond the imaginative powers of a mere uneducated seaman.

The *Prometheus* set sail for the Salvages, anchored off the largest island, and a force of men was sent ashore to dig. A bay was found, just as Christian Cruse had described, also a level strip of white beach. Fifty men set to work with shovels and pikes, stimulated by the hope of winning a reward of a hundred dollars offered by Captain Robinson to the sailor who should find the first chest, or the coffin of the murdered captain.

But this search was abandoned after the first day! The anchorage was unsafe, the captain's delay was unauthorized by the Admiralty, and he had other work to do. Returning to Madeira he found there orders recalling his ship to England. Those were busy times for the British navy; the *Prometheus* was assigned to emergency duty, and the treasure hunt abandoned.

From 1813 until the outfitting of the *Alerte*, so far as known, no other attempt had been made to find the chests of dollars. Knight resolved to visit the uninhabited isle on his way to Trinidad, his final objective point.

Upon the arrival of the *Alerte* off the Salvages, it was decided that the island called Great Piton most closely resembled the one described in the report of CaptainRobinson. A bay was found shaped like the body of water pictured by the dying Spaniard; also a strip of white sand above high-water mark. Thereupon the adventurers upon the *Alerte* pitched a camp upon the beach and started in digging.

A few trenches were opened up and some bones brought to light. The surgeon of the cutter, however, was doubtful if the bones were those of a human being. The partners of the Trinidad quest were anxious to be on their way to the South Atlantic. Thus, after a perfunctory search lasting but four days, the men of the *Alerte* put off to sea.

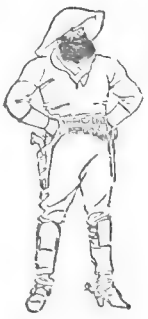
Since the visit of the *Alerte* in 1889 there has been—so far as known—no dollar-hunting expedition to the Salvages. In all probability the treasure is still there, close by the moldering bones of the slain Spanish captain.

Granted that the old beaches have been washed away, and that new beaches have been formed by the waves and currents of a hundred years, it seems both possible and likely that there must be some way of studying the action of the water, that the approximate position of the old beach may be determined. And then, again, the islands are very small, no hostile natives are present to endanger the lives of treasure-seekers, nothing harder than sand has to be dug through, and the authentic records may be consulted for the asking.

But five days have been expended in all in the search for the silver *pesos* upon the Salvages. True, it is not such an alluring quest as some of the bigger ones, where larger values are involved, but it would seem that two millions of Spanish dollars, buried in a strip of sand not many days' sail out of New York or London, constitute a stake decidedly worth playing for.

At any rate, the treasure upon the Salvages is worthy of a more serious effort to lift it than has yet been made.

THE PIRATE TREASURE ON TRINIDAD



OF ALL pirate hoards uncovered to date, one of the most famous and best authenticated is that buried upon the volcanic isle of Trinidad—not the Trinidad of the West Indies, but the Trinidad in the South Atlantic, about seven hundred miles off the Brazilian coast. That each of these treasures is immensely valuable, is the popular belief—a reasonable one, inasmuch as certain estimates dovetail nicely with the

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facts at hand. This treasure on Trinidad is supposed to be the loot of one Benito de Soto, slave-runner, mutineer and pirate.

According to all accounts, Benito de Soto (no connection of the pirate Benito Bonito), was a Spaniard by birth, who, sometime during the early nineteenth century, sailed from Buenos Aires, bound for an African port. He had been up to that time a slave-runner, but not so far as known had he ever been officer of a ship. A few days out from Buenos Aires, De Soto persuaded the crew of Spanish and Portuguese cutthroats to mutiny. So they marooned their captain, made off with the ship, and hoisted the black flag. They then proceeded to loot, burn and kill without mercy, until some time later, when most of them were garroted in Cuba. De Soto himself escaped, but afterward, when shipwrecked off the coast of Spain, he was apprehended and hung by the governor of Gibraltar.

Many years passed by, and although the world at large suspected that De Soto had hidden much of his ill-gotten gold on some out-of-the-way island, Trinidad was never thought of until some time late in the forties, when a retired sea-captain, who had once been engaged in the opium trade, gave out the following story:

"The China seas were infested by pirates so that my vessel carried a few guns and a larger crew than is usual in those days. I had four quartermasters, one of whom was a foreigner. I am not sure of his nationality, but I think he was a Finn. On board the vessel the man went under the name of 'The Pirate,' because of a deep scar across his cheek, which gave him a somewhat sinister appearance. He was a reserved man, better educated than the ordinary sailor, and possessed a good knowledge of navigation.

"I took a liking to him, and showed him kindness on various occasions. While on a voyage from China to Bombay this man was taken sick, and by the time the vessel reached port he was so ill, in spite of my nursing, that he had to be taken to the hospital.

"He gradually sank, and when he found that he was dying, he told me that he felt very grateful for the kind treatment given him, and that he would prove his gratitude by revealing a secret which might make me one of the richest men in England. He then asked me to go to his chest and take from it a parcel. This contained a piece of old tarpaulin with a plan of the island of Trinidad on it.

"The dying sailor told me that at the spot indicated—that is, at the base of the mountain known as Sugar Loaf—there was an immense treasure buried, consisting principally of gold and silver plate and ornaments, the plunder of Peruvian churches which certain pirates had concealed there in the year 1821. Much of this plate, he said, came from the Cathedral of Lima, having been carried away from there during the war of independence, when the Spaniards were escaping the country, and that among other riches were many massive gold candlesticks.

"He further stated that he was the only survivor of the pirates, as all the others had been captured by the Spaniards and executed in Cuba some years before, and consequently that no one but himself knew the secret. He then gave me instructions as to the exact position of the treasure on the shore of the bay under the Sugar Loaf, and enjoined me to go there and search for it, as he was almost certain that it had not been removed."

So much for the old sea-captain's story. Now for corroborative data. The archives of the island of Cuba record that a gang of twenty pirates was captured by the Spaniards and sent to Cuba to be garroted. They had been found guilty of plundering treasure ships sailing from Lima shortly after the revolution started.

Furthermore, the sea-captain, unable to make the voyage himself, had in 1880 sent his son to Trinidad to try to identify the marks shown on the old pirate's canvas chart. The son landed from a sailing ship, but did no digging. Upon his return he reported that the place tallied with the description, but that a landslide of reddish earth had covered the spot where the treasure was hid.

In 1885 an expedition was organized. A bark was chartered, the *Aurea*, and fitted out with tools and boats and powder. Upon its arrival the party surveyed the wild, rock-bound coast of Trinidad in awe. Huge breakers beat about it from every side. There was no safe harbor. Eight men were eventually landed, but they must have been weaklings indeed, for after scratching a small trench, and being scared by the huge land crabs which scuttled about them on

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all sides, they gave up the search and signaled to be taken aboard their vessel. Thus ended the first search for the treasure upon Trinidad.

Later in the same year an American is reported as having chartered a French vessel for a cruise to Trinidad. Undermanned by Portuguese, after a brief absence from Rio Janeiro, the vessel returned to port, in all probability without an ounce of the treasure aboard. There were not men enough. Her equipment must have been too slight. Trinidad needs lighters, steam excavators capable of moving thousands of cubic feet of earth in a day, blasting gelatin, a few calm days—But we are getting ahead of our story.

The chart of tarpaulin falling into the possession of Mr. E. F. Knight, a young English lawyer, he mustered his company of adventurers and bought the cutter *Alerte*, as described in the story of the silver treasure upon the Salvages. This was in 1889. Several years before he had ever heard of the treasure, Knight had touched at Trinidad while on a voyage from Montevideo to Bahia. He had been curious to see this remote islet so seldom visited.

Therefore, when he became acquainted with the information given out by the old pirate, and gained possession of the chart, he was able to verify from his own knowledge many of the details. To use his own words: "The quartermaster's carefully prepared plan of the island, the minute directions he gave as to the best landing, and his description of the features of the bay on whose shores the treasure was concealed, proved beyond doubt to myself and others who knew Trinidad, that he landed on this so rarely visited islet; and not only landed, but passed some time on it. He knew the safest passages between the reefs. This information could not have been obtained from any pilot-book.

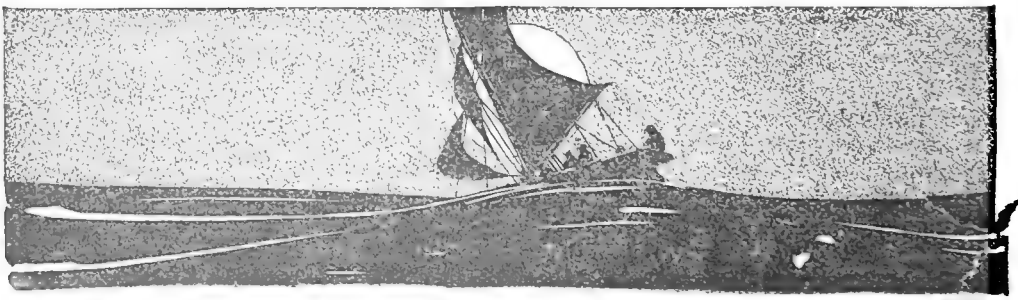
"And beyond this, the quartermaster must have been acquainted with what was taking place in two other distant portions of the world during the year of his professed landing on the desert island. He knew of the escape of pirates with the Cathedral of Lima plate. He was also aware that shortly afterward there were garroted in Cuba the crew of a vessel that had committed acts of piracy. It is scarcely credible that an ordinary seaman—even allowing that he was superior in education to the average of his fellows—could have pieced these facts together so ingeniously into this plausible story."

Knight's companions thought as he did, so his nine partners put up their money and entered into an agreement that provided that "one twentieth of the treasure recovered was to be received by every gentleman adventurer, and he in turn bound himself to work hard and obey orders."

In due time, after the slight delay at the Salvages, where the party made a perfunctory search for two millions of Spanish *pesos*, the *Alerte* bore down upon Trinidad. In the South Atlantic Directory is stated: "The surf at Trinidad is often incredibly great, and has been seen to break over a bluff which is over two hundred feet high."

This proved to be the condition when Knight and his companions arrived off Trinidad, but after exercising patience, after considerable danger and exertion had been experienced, the men landed with their tools and stores.

From the position of the island, directly in the path of the southeast trade winds, many vessels must have been driven ashore there. Knight saw gaunt rows of ribs along the whole Windward coast, where ships had been stranded bodily. Who can say what treasures some of the hulks of these old East Indiamen and galleons from Peru still



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contain? Gold is practically imperishable; doubloons and pieces of eight are none the worse for a century's soaking.

Camp was pitched near the ravine at the head of the bay on the southeastern shore of the island, and the men of the *Alerte* set to work.

For twelve weeks they toiled, cutting trenches and cross trenches. They removed soil and rocks until the ravine was literally criss-crossed with trenches. They worked from sunrise until fleeting twilight; they worked until their picks and shovels dropped from their blistered and swollen fingers, until their heads swam, and their knees bent beneath them.

And they failed! At last, their provisions short, worn out in body and spirit, they surveyed the piled-up mounds of earth, and sadly bundled up their camp-kit. Then after the dangerous threading of the passage out to where their cutter was anchored, they hoisted her sails and stood off to the northward.

From that day to this no serious effort has been made to gain the treasure upon Trinidad.

One other expedition landed there, scratched the soil, and sailed away. In this age of hydroscopes, hydraulic apparatus, and excavating machines which have bitten their way from ocean to ocean between the two Americas, it is not unlikely that a way will be found to probe the wrecks off Trinidad, and reach the treasure on shore.

But the cruise of the *Alerte* was not in vain. In the language of its biographer: "The toilers had been paid in richer stuff than gold. They had lived the true romance, nor could a man of spirit and imagination wish for anything more to his taste than to be encamped on a desert island, with the surf shouting in his ears, the seabirds crying, and all hands up at daybreak to dig for buried treasure, whose bearings were found on a tarpaulin chart that had belonged to a pirate with a deep scar across the cheek."

These were adventures indeed—adventures which may also be experienced by the next expedition to seek the treasure upon Trinidad.

And there seems little reason to doubt that some courageous seeker after wealth will soon make a determined effort to gain the possession of this treasure.

THE COCOS ISLAND TREASURE

OF ALL treasure islands, Cocos Island easily transcends, in point of lure and romance, all others. Within the last thirty-five years, no fewer than twenty-eight different expeditions have been organized to search for it; but so far without result.

There are supposed to be two treasure hoards there. The first was the plunder from many gold ships and richly freighted merchantmen looted by Benito Bonito, in the Pacific up to 1820. It is estimated to be worth sixty million dollars, and is said to lie buried on this lonely islet, sixteen square miles in area, lying three hundred miles west of Panama. Bonito murdered half his crew on burying the treasure; but his vessel, being undermanned, was dismasted soon after, and putting into Valparaiso to refit, he was recognized, and all were hanged save a boy named Thompson, taken shortly before from an English ship.

In 1839, the boy, now grown to manhood, was in Lima, master of the brig *Mary Dear*, when a revolution broke out, and churchmen, grandees, and notables piled treasure aboard her to the amount of fifteen million dollars, believing them safe under the British flag. But Thompson and his crew set sail at night for Cocos, dividing part of the spoil among them and burying the rest—eleven boatloads—ashore.

While Thompson was thus engaged a Peruvian gunboat sent in chase, captured the brig and shot the crew; but Thompson hid in a cave and escaped, being taken off the island later by a passing craft, which supposed him to be a shipwrecked mariner.

Five years later, being without facilities for recovering the treasure himself, he disclosed the facts to one Keating, mate of the Newfoundland bark *Albatross*, while crossing from Liverpool to St. Johns. At the latter place Thompson was taken ill, and, escaping from Keating's home while light-headed, perished in a snow-drift. Having a parchment map and oral data, Keating fitted out a schooner, sailed round Cape Horn, and duly reached Cocos, where he afterward declared he found the treasure, and selected from it jewels worth some

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thirteen thousand dollars, which he concealed on his person, fearing to take more lest his crew might murder him in their cupidity. He informed the latter that he had failed in his quest.

In 1848, after having returned to St. Johns, he induced Johnstone, a merchant there, whose firm still survives, to equip the schooner *Gauntlet*, and send him on a second voyage. Keating claimed that he and the captain of the *Gauntlet* unearthed the hoard a second time, filled a sack with diamonds and gems, and put off again in their boat, when a squall overturned it, the captain and the sack were lost, and Keating had to return once more with only a few gems he had put in his pocket as they worked. He could never raise means for a third trial, but in 1881 he and a shipmaster named Hackett were planning a cruise when Hackett succumbed to yellow fever in Havana, and Keating himself died shortly after hearing the news.

Hackett's brother and Keating's widow tried the venture ten years later, but without result, and during recent years sealers from Japan, beach-combers from the South Seas, Admiral Pallister in the British warship *Imperieuse* (who put one hundred men and an adequate supply of explosives ashore there for a month's work) and numerous others have engaged in the same seeming wild-goose chase. Harold W. S. Gray, an Irish gentleman, with the yacht *Rosmarine*, recently spent two years there, with a force of peons exploring likely spots, but without result. Lord Fitzwilliam, in 1904, went out from England in the steamer *Veronique*, and tried for the treasure, but only succeeded in damaging himself and several of his associates by a premature explosion of dynamite.

Both these expeditions abandoned their quest in November, 1905, and it was given out that they believed the treasure to have been secured and carried away in the past, or that the encroachments of the sea had submerged it beyond hope of recovery. Captain Gessler, a German, and his wife have lived on the island for some years and sought for the treasure unceasingly, but without any result.

For some time, hardly a year has passed but an expedition or two for Cocos Island has sailed. In 1906, a company organized in Seattle issued an elaborately printed prospectus, offering shares in a venture to sail in a retired pilot schooner, and recounting all the old tales of Captain Thompson, Benito Bonito, and Keating.

At about the same time, a wealthy woman of Boston, after a Summer visit to Newfoundland, was seized with enthusiasm for a romantic speculation and talked of finding a ship and crew. San Francisco has beheld nearly a score of schooners slide out through the Golden Gate in quest of Cocos Island hoards.

1911 and 1912 were banner years for Cocos treasure parties. Thus two Englishwomen set out from Plymouth in July, 1912, and spent eight months on the island, with the usual result. Another expedition set out at the same time from Marseilles, headed by a French actress, Mathilde Durand. She has returned, quite needless to say, empty-handed.

But, to enumerate these ventures and describe them in detail would make a tiresome catalogue of the names of vessels and adventurous men with the treasure-bee in their bonnets. Charts and genuine information are no longer necessary to one of these expeditions. Cocos Island is under such a spell as has set a multitude to digging for the treasure of Captain Kidd.

The gold is still there, this is taken for granted. The island was long a haunt of buccaneers and pirates, this much is certain, and who ever heard of a true pirate who did not bury more treasure than he squandered?

THOMAS MCCAESKEY'S EXPEDITION

IN AUGUST of 1909 an expedition was organized near Norwalk, Ohio, for the purpose of proceeding to a small island off the Cuban coast to search for a treasure of gold and silver said to be hidden in a cave many years ago. Among the men associated in the venture was one Thomas McCaeskey—the moving spirit, in fact.

According to McCaeskey's story, many years ago a pirate ship carrying a large amount of treasure looted from some Mexican seaport or ship was pursued by a Mexican gunboat. After a long chase, realizing they could not escape, the pirates steered their ship for this small island. They succeeded in making a landing, after which they

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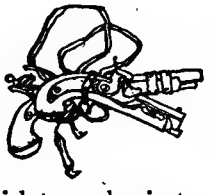
fought off their pursuers until all of their stolen treasure had been hidden.

In the battle, all of the pirates but one, a mere boy, were killed. In due time the boy made his escape, and managed to reach Cuba. Here, he settled down to an honest life, married, and raised children and grandchildren.

While McCaeskey was in Cuba—according to his story—he rescued from drowning one day a young girl who proved to be the granddaughter of the lone survivor of the pirate crew. Out of gratitude, the ex-pirate, a very old man, revealed to McCaeskey the secret of the hidden treasure, and furnished him with a detailed map showing the exact situation of the island and the cave in which the treasure was supposed to have been buried.

There is nothing on record, so far as known, to show that McCaeskey and his party profited by the revelations of the old ex-pirate, and in all probability neither gold, silver nor jewels were brought to light by the treasure seekers from Ohio. Pirate gold has ever been elusive.

FIVE TREASURE ISLETS



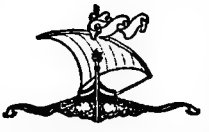
IN LATITUDE 40° 19′ South, longitude 9° 44′ West, is situated the island of Diego Alvarez, sometimes called Gough Island. Upon this unfrequented and lonely islet much pirate gold is said to have been buried. Very little authentic data may be had; estimates as to the value and measure of the treasure are lacking, but through all the tales relating to Diego Alvarez, "A conspicuous spire, a pinnacle of stone on the western end of the island, the name of which natural landmark is set down on the chart as 'Church Rock,'" looms up. This is said to mark the location for digging.

Juan Fernandez, famed as the home of Robinson Crusoe, is said to be the location of the wreck of a Spanish galleon reputed to have been laden with bullion from the mines of Peru. The island is small, thus it should be easy to prove or disprove the veracity of the story of this wreck, unless the shifting sands of centuries have buried her from sight forever. Also, upon Juan Fernandez is said to be a cave containing a buccaneer's hoard of loot.

Many years ago a single chest of pirate silver was found upon Nightingale Island in the South Atlantic. This was brought to the United States, but much more is said to remain behind. The island of Tristan da Cunha, near Nightingale Island, is also said to have hidden wealth upon it, but details and corroborative data are lacking.

Upon one of the Philippine Islands, in the Rio Grande swamps near the City of Calumpit, lies buried incalculable wealth of the Chinese Mandarin, Chan Lee Suey. This wealth is supposed to have been buried not long after the British took Manila in 1762. Among the priceless jewels of the Chinese potentate, there is said to be a string of pearls bought from the Sultan of Sulu. These gems are reported to be the largest, most perfectly matched, most valuable pearls in existence.

"CAPTAIN KIDD"—HIS DOUBTFUL HOARD ON OAK ISLAND



THE best treasure stories are those that do not get into print. It is many a long day since any of the celebrated treasure hoards have been reported as having actually been found. But authenticated cases prove that when treasure is really found there is a tendency upon the part of the finder to slip away with his loot and say nothing about it.

Treasure has been found and spirited away in this manner. And in many cases expeditions are still being fitted out to find a treasure which was picked up, converted into money, and spent long ago.

For instance, it is a known fact that shortly after Captain William Kidd was hanged in London in 1701, his treasure, or part of it, was found at Gardiner's Island. But there was so little of it that no one was satisfied that it was really his "treasure," so to this day the search for the bulk of it goes on as merrily as ever.

The question is: Has the bulk of Kidd's treasures since been found and spirited away as described? There is very little reason to believe that it may have been.

Oak Island, in Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia, was one of the spots thought likely as the hiding place of Kidd's treasure. Since 1795 there have been intermittent operations

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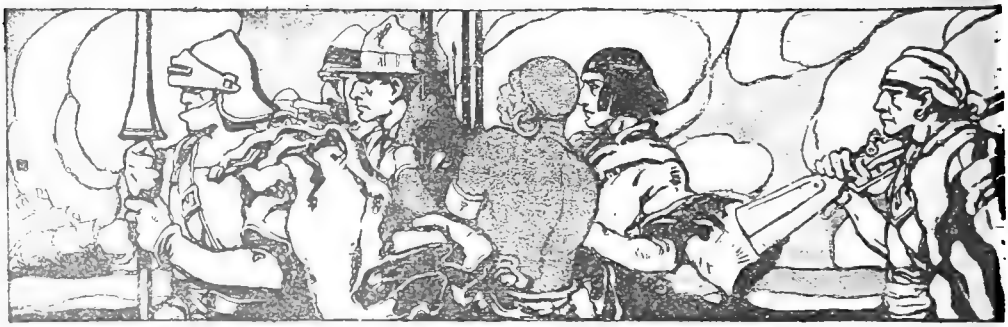

there for the recovery of a traditional cache of bullion and silver.

Among others who held a clue to the cache's whereabouts and believed in it was one of the Governors of Nova Scotia, who spent a considerable amount of money in a vain search for the treasure.

The island, afterward placed as Oak Island, was described in the original clue as a clay-bottom island covered with hardwood trees. Near the beach on one side would be found a tunnel, the mouth of it banked with cocoa matting to keep out the water.

Oak Island answered the description, even to the matting, but the sea had welled into the natural tunnel from some subterranean source, and it was impossible to reach by ordinary means the spot where the bullion was supposed to be.

A pit was started over the spot where the treasure was supposed to lie, but again the sea defied all efforts. Many attempts were made to reach the gold and silver, and enough hints of genuine treasure were found to satisfy everybody that the stuff was there. There is a merchant in St. John, New Brunswick, who has in his possession an old plate taken from Oak Island. It is so covered with rust and crust that the unmistakable engraving upon the plate can not be read. The use of drills by a company in 1890 discovered some interesting clues to this supposed treasure.

The auger went through eighteen inches of spruce at a considerable depth, and then eight inches of oak. Immediately after that it passed through a half inch of iron, followed by space. "When the drill was taken up it was found that the auger carried a piece of gold chain."

A company formed to get after this treasure, in spite of the flooding sea, got to work in 1909. Whether it found anything is not clear, but the company was equipped with diving apparatus, diamond drills, and every facility for conquering the subterranean flood which covered the supposed treasure.

Against all this, an unromantic tale is told by an old salt up in the Bay of Fundy. This old fellow was with the expedition in 1890.

"Do you s'pose," said he, "if they found gold chain on the auger they'd give up? No, sir. The reason they gave up was because they found the treasure and it was—rum. I know, because I drank some of it!"

Probably there is some truth in this, for it is only a popular idea that when a pirate buried anything it was gold. As a matter of fact, being unable with safety to enter any port where the law prevailed, the buccaneer was often forced to put ashore on one of the many islands of the Caribbees or along the American coast in order to re-store from provisions and rum previously cached, or to cut hardwood "sticks" for his vessel. A treasure of rum should be worth something, however, and even the find of Captain Kidd's instruments, or an old anchor of the famous pirate ship *Adventure*, would be worth some labor as a historical curio.

It is remarkable that in recent years the scene of treasure hunting has moved from the West Indies and the Pacific to the North Atlantic Coast. There is a reason for this—the same logic which, without any destruction of romance, has directed the modern search for treasure.

Half the hunt for treasure used to be among tropic islands. Fever, palm trees, bones and pirated gold were the novelist's conception of treasure cemeteries. Cold logic and historical fact have been brought to bear upon the subject, however, and now the scene of the treasure hunt is usually far removed from the scene of piratic operations.

Here is the reason: At the time when

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Kidd, England, and the master pirate Morgan were sailing the seas, the buccaneers feared neither man, King nor devil. They put into any port with their loot from Spanish commerce, and actually shared with the authorities in some cases. The great headquarters of the pirates was Port Royal, Jamaica, called then "the wickedest spot in the universe."

After Morgan's sack of Panama, the culmination of a series of outrages against the Spanish colonies and commerce, a treaty between Spain and England called for a cessation of buccaneering operations of English or English-backed pirates. It was about this time that Morgan was told to be good, was knighted, and made Governor of Jamaica, where he had been king of the buccaneers for so long. It is a fact that this polished scoundrel made a virtue of necessity, and hanged his old comrades as fast as he could lay hands on them.

Kidd was hanged about this time, too, in 1701, to be precise. The disruption of Morgan's allied fleet of buccaneers, the death of Kidd, and the end of Captain England spelled the close of the great buccaneer era. The English frigates, at peace with Spain, scattered the pirates, who were forced in ones, or pairs at most, to the Pacific or the American coast. In time they vanished from the seas.

> For some had died by rum and sword,
> Yelling, heave-ho an' a heigh-O!
> And some at the dock on a long taut cord,
> With a ho, an' a heigh, an' a heave-O!

It was during this scurry that all ships made haste to get rid of their tell-tale loot. After they had buried it they could sail the high seas after more pickings, and it was all right as long as they were not caught in the act, or discovered with a lost ship's loot aboard. Hence the numerous burials of treasure, or at least of evidential matter, such as ships' papers, large supplies of rum (piratical evidence of an undeniable sort!) and miscellaneous curios taken from ships that had been missing for some time.

But, to return to Oak Island—the Cocos Island of the North—an eminent engineer, after studying the operations of the various syndicates, expressed the opinion that no treasure is buried in "the Money Pit" of Oak Island. His reasons are: "It would have been a long and tremendous operation to dig a tunnel by hand over one hundred feet under ground; the opening, or drain, could not have been kept open on a sea beach. Water did not reach the 'Money Pit' through a tunnel, because water was always struck at the level of the seventeen-foot strata of coarse gravel and sand. It was salt water, and percolated through from the bay, one hundred and fifty feet distant. The more the water was pumped the easier it came; the sand settling to the bottom of the strata, while the clay above remained intact."

The engineer reasons further, that no borings ever brought up links of gold chain or anything else of value, because such articles do not stick to a flat chisel, or auger, through one hundred and twenty feet of water. Different operators are reported to have found traces of the treasures at different depths, from one hundred and ten feet to one hundred and fifty feet, all in a five-by-seven hole. The treasure must have dropped fifty feet!

One syndicate discovered (?) a bit of sheepskin parchment which was exhibited to credulous stockholders and would-be purchasers of stock. It is understood that more stock was then sold and more work done, without result.

Quite recently a new company was formed to grapple with the secret of Oak Island, which has already swallowed at least a hundred thousand dollars in labor and machinery. For more than a century, sane, hard-headed Nova Scotians have tried to reach the bottom of the "Money Pit," and as an attractive speculation it has no rival in the field of treasure-seeking. There may be documents somewhere in existence, a chart or memorandum moldering in a sea chest in some attic or cellar of France, England or Spain, that will furnish the key to this rarely picturesque and tantalizing puzzle.

The unbeliever has only to go to Nova Scotia in the Summer-time and seek out Oak Island, which is reached by way of the town of Chester, to find the deeply pitted area of the treasure hunt, and very probably engines and workmen busy at the fine old game of digging for pirates' gold.

So much for Oak Island. Now for some facts about Captain Kidd. As for his riches, the original documents in his case, preserved among the state papers of the Public Record Office in London, relate with much detail what booty he had and what he did with it. Alas! They reveal the futility of the searches

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after "the stout sea chest buried above high-water mark."

Beyond doubt, the only authentic Kidd treasure *was dug up and inventoried at Gardiner's Island more than two hundred years ago!* Nor has the slightest clue to any other hoard been found since then.

Most of the Kidd treasure-legends of the Atlantic Coast are based upon fable and legend, with no more foundation than what somebody heard from his grandfather, who may have dreamed that Captain Kidd or Blackbeard once landed in a near-by cove.

BURIED TREASURE IN THE ISLES OF SHOALS

NO COVES or islands of our North Atlantic seaboard are richer in buried-treasure legends than are the Isles of Shoals lying just off the New Hampshire coast. Here are said to be buried various treasures, some of them said to have been the booty of the celebrated Captain Teach, or "Blackbeard," as he was often called.

He is supposed to have buried immense treasure here, some of which is said to have been dug up and appropriated by the islanders. One of the old legends runs as follows:

On one of his cruises, while lying off the Scottish coast waiting for a rich trader, he was boarded by a stranger who came off in a small boat from the shore. The visitor demanded to be led before the pirate chief, in whose cabin he remained closeted for some time.

At length Blackbeard appeared on deck with the stranger, whom he introduced as a comrade. The vessel they were expecting soon came in sight and, after a bloody conflict, became the prize of Blackbeard. The newcomer had shown such bravery that he was given command of the captured merchantman.

The stranger soon proved himself to be a pirate leader of great skill and bravery, and went cruising off to the southward and the coasts of the Spanish Main. At last after his appetite for wealth had been satisfied, he sailed back to his native land of Scotland, made a landing and returned on board with the insensible body of a beautiful young woman in his arms.

The pirate ship then made sail, crossed the Atlantic, and anchored in the roadstead of the Isles of Shoals. Here the crew passed the time in secreting their riches and carousing. The commander's portion was buried on an island apart from the rest. He roamed over the isles with his beautiful companion, forgetful, it would seem, of his fearful trade, until one day a sail was seen standing in for the islands.

All was now activity on board the pirate; but before getting under way the outlaw carried the maiden to the island where he had buried his treasure, and made her take a fearful oath to guard the spot from mortals until his return, "were it till doomsday."

The strange sail proved to be a warlike vessel in search of the freebooter. A long and desperate battle ensued, in which the cruiser at last silenced her adversary's guns. The vessels were grappled for a last struggle when a terrible explosion strewed the sea with fragments of both. Stung to madness by defeat, knowing that if taken alive a gibbet awaited him, the rover had fired the magazine, involving friend and foe in a common fate.

A few mangled wretches succeeded in reaching the islands, only to persish miserably, one by one, from hunger and cold. The pirate's mistress remained true to her oath to the last, or until she had succumbed to want and exposure.

By report, she had been seen more than once on White Island—a tall, shapely figure, wrapped in a long sea-cloak, her head and neck uncovered, except by a profusion of golden hair. Her face is described as exquisitely rounded, but pale and still as marble.

She takes her stand on the verge of a low, projecting point, gazing fixedly out upon the ocean in an attitude of intense expectation. A former race of fisherman averred that her ghost was doomed to haunt those rocks "until the last trump shall sound," and that the ancient graves to be found on the islands were tenanted by Blackbeard's men.

It is quite likely that certain treasure is still hidden among the Isles of Shoals, secreted by followers of the pirate John Quelch. That gold was actually brought ashore is proved by an entry in the record of the town of Salem, Massachusetts. The record, which was written in the year 1704, reads as follows:

"Major Stephen Sewall, Captain John Turner, and forty volunteers embarked in a

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shallop and left Fort Pinnance after sunset to go in search of some pirates who sailed from Gloucester in the morning. Major Sewall brought into Salem a galley, Captain Thomas Lowrimore, on board of which he had captured some pirates, and *some of their gold* at the Isles of Shoals. Major Sewall carried the pirates to Boston under a strong guard. Captain Quelch and five of his crew are hung. About thirteen of the ship's company remain under sentence of death, and several more are cleared."

It is fairly certain that not all of the ill-gotten gold of Quelch was taken away from the Isles of Shoals by this expedition, and if not, there it lies to this day.

THE TREASURE ON "SPREAD-EAGLE" ISLAND

CASCO BAY, on the Maine coast, is a favorite region for rumors of buried treasure, as indeed is almost every indentation of the Atlantic seaboard from the Carolinas to Nova Scotia; but a tale that seems to be somewhat truthful comes from the waters north of there—the Bay of Fundy. It is the story of an island which has never yet been found, although there is said to be a chart of it in existence which is as good as any chart in any story book, and has the advantage of being apparently genuine.

This treasure island is called "Spread-Eagle Island." It is supposed to lie near the head of the Bay of Fundy, and to have buried on it a treasure of gold of great value. The exact nature and quantity of treasure, as well as its origin, is somewhat vague; but that several men have had the utmost confidence in the existence of the hoard, and have sought persistently for it for generations, ought to count for something.

About thirty-two years ago an old Frenchman turned up at Eastport, Maine. He set about fitting out a small Digby-built schooner for a mysterious trip. It seems the Frenchman was comparatively ignorant—a common sailor. But he had an idea, and a paper which he guarded carefully, and it became known that this schooner and this expedition were the culmination of a life dream, the investment of a life's savings.

He hired a negro as an assistant, and sailed up Passamaquoddy Bay. After he left Eastport, it was rumored that the old Frenchman had in his possession a queer old map with a picture of a bird on it, with words written on the wings and head and tail.

At irregular intervals fishermen reported the Frenchman's schooner as cruising around among the islands in the Bay of Fundy. They also reported that the old man himself spent a great deal of his time ashore prowling around the woods and rocks of various islands.

A few months later the old Frenchman returned to Eastport, alone and broken-hearted. His schooner had been wrecked, and the negro helper drowned. But he had survived, and so had his curious map, which he showed to several sympathizers. It was the map of an island shaped like a spread eagle. Between the wings, on the back, well up toward the neck of the bird, was a circle, designating where a great treasure was supposed to be buried.

The old man had had this map in his possession for fully sixty years, and his father and grandfather had had it before him. It had been his dream to save enough money with which to cross the seas, buy a small vessel, and search for the island that was shaped like a bird. And now his dream was shattered.

But we now have a fact which goes to support this story thirty-two years old. In 1909 a middle-aged sailor appeared among the islands of the Bay of Fundy. He was a stranger. He made a palpable pretext of lobster fishing, and aroused the curiosity of the local fishermen. To a village magnate, a person reported as not having enough imagination to lie, even if he wanted to, this sailor told a strange story.

When a cabin-boy in a Pacific trader some twenty-two years before, so the story goes, he had made the acquaintance of an old Frenchman called "Jules," who died of scurvy and old age. Jules loved in his senile way to tell the cabin-boy strange tales. He had apparently "seen things" in his day. Among other stories he told the boy of an immense treasure which was supposedly buried on a certain spread-eagle-shaped island in the Bay of Fundy.

Old Jules told the boy that he himself had searched for the island, but had failed. His story finished, the old man fished out of his

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ditty-bag a tattered old map showing an island shaped like a spread eagle, with a circle on it between the wings, "well up on the back, near the neck of the bird."

History was repeating itself. Here was a man who had met the old Frenchman in his later years. With the map in his possession through all these years, the cabin-boy, now a middle-aged man, at last came to the Bay of Fundy. And there he was at last accounts, still up there, lobster-fishing for a daily living, but always moving from one of the many islands to another, fishing, digging, dreaming—living with the hope that he will one day find "the island shaped like a spread eagle," the Treasure Island of his dreams.

SUNKEN GOLD ALONG THE FLORIDA KEYS

FLORIDA is famous not only for its treasures of golden-hued oranges and other semi-tropical fruits, but also for its stores of hidden and sunken gold, secreted on or lost off its sandy shores years and years ago.

A chain of coral and coquina keys extends south from St. Augustine, around the southernmost extremity of the peninsula, to Key West and the Dry Tortugas. A shorter chain runs up the west coast. History and tradition has it that these islets were visited by the desperate daredevils who frequented the waters of the Spanish Main and the Gulf of Mexico in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the average native Floridian has an abiding faith in the belief that, could these low-lying sandy keys be made to disgorge their stores of piratical treasure, gold enough would be found to transform half the population into multi-millionaires.

The existence of such treasure has, in a measure, been proved during the lifetime and within the memory of many people now living in southern Florida, for in a number of instances several of these long-concealed hoards have actually been brought to light, thus inspiring and strengthening the belief in the existence of larger and more valuable wrecks and deposits.

There is, for instance, a pretty little place in the southern part of the State, in De Soto County, known as Grove City. It is situated on the mainland, near the Gulf of Mexico, to the north of Charlotte Harbor, and opposite Gasparilla Island. It is here, in this region, either on the mainland or on the island which bears his name, that the desperado Gasparilla is said to have buried the greater part of his ill-gotten booty.

A legend of the locality relates that Gasparilla came ashore one evening just after nightfall and buried chests of treasure somewhere immediately above high-water mark. The story runs that not only this treasure, but several Gasparilla treasures in the shape of golden doubloons and bars of the same precious metal are still buried in the neighborhood. The intrinsic value of the buried wealth is estimated as being not far from eleven millions of dollars. Scores of treasure-seekers have sought in vain for this great store of hidden gold.

In Grove City there is a story extant to the effect that an old pirate by the name of Gomez, said to have been a member of Gasparilla's band of cutthroats, was present upon several occasions when his chief landed for the purpose of burying his wealth. Gomez survived Gasparilla, but never made any attempt to locate or disturb the treasure during his lifetime, on account, he said, "of the souls of the dead pirates, who spent most of their time, when they were not howling over the misery of their fate or playing havoc with ships during a storm, in watching the places where the gold had been buried in the sands."

Gomez is reported to have said that he had too much good sense to disturb or attempt to remove a mass of treasure, no matter how great, guarded by such watchers as these. He knew the old crew of Captain Gasparilla too well to risk an encounter with any of them, alive or dead.

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Gomez was a cabin-boy aboard Gasparilla's ship when the pirate is said to have landed and buried his chief treasure; and, according to Frank Richards, a former old resident of Manatee County, Gomez said that he could find it in the dark, only "the saints preserve him from ever going near the place after sunset!" It is not recorded that Richards ever made any effort to locate definitely the buried gold, although he is said to have been on intimate terms with the erstwhile cabin-boy of the pirate ship, whose life was spared on account of his youth when Gasparilla was captured.

An old resident of Punta Gorda, Florida, says that some years ago, during the early nineties, two unknown young men came ashore from a small sloop and camped for several weeks on an island north of Gasparilla Island. Little or nothing was seen of them upon the mainland, and then they departed as secretly as they came. Persons who had been watching the island from a distance reported that two men had loaded something aboard their sloop just before sunset upon the evening of their disappearance.

Later, a party of sponge-gatherers went out to the island, landed, visited the deserted camp, and much to their surprise found the island pitted with holes. Upon high ground they found one hole deeper and larger than the others, and near it the scattered fragments of what had once been a large wooden chest. Clearing out some of the sand which had streamed back into the hole, the searchers came upon fragments of eight skeletons.

Several weeks later it is recorded that there was a heavy sale of old Spanish gold coin in the city of New Orleans, and that the proceeds were turned over to two young strangers who had more of the coin, and who "eventually became wealthy."

On the southern extremity of the Pinellas Peninsula, which is heavily wooded and overgrown with shrubbery, vines and creepers, is a point of land known thereabouts as "Maximo Point." It is upon this point of land, running far down into the waters of Great Tampa Bay, and separating it from the Gulf of Mexico, that the pirate Maximo is said to have made his home.

Maximo was an old man when he retired from his chosen profession. It was upon the very extremity of the point bearing his name that he made his home, overlooking the place of meeting of the waters of Great Tampa Bay and the blue waves of the Gulf of Mexico.

He surrounded his cottage with a screen of tropical foliage, and is said to have kept a small sloop provisioned and watered in a small cove nearby, so that in case of an emergency he could have made his escape seaward. He never went far away from his cottage, never spent a picayune which he could help; and, of course, viewed from the native Floridian's standpoint, what he did not spend he must have saved.

Maximo is said to have died peacefully in his bed, as all honest men should, after a life of crime, and possessed of all his wickedly gained wealth. In explanation of his reluctance to spend money or make any attempt to dispose of any of his store of gold and jewels, the story runs that one of his victims, when dying, cursed the pirate with an elaborate series of blasphemies, and prophesied that, should Maximo ever attempt to reap any satisfaction from the wealth gained through robbery and murder, an evil fate would most surely overtake him.

Scared by the prophecy, Maximo became a miser, and is said to have spent the balance of his life guarding and hoarding the gold in which he could take no satisfaction. At the present time, the burning question is, "What became of the gold?" Several attempts have been made to locate the hoard, but as yet it has not been unearthed. It is said that it was buried upon the point of land in the vicinage of his cottage; others have it that he took the treasure over to Tampa and secreted it upon the mainland.

One night during the early part of 1903 a party of negroes from Tampa landed on Maximo Point for the purpose of making a search for the treasure. One of the men is said to have had in his possession a chart showing where the gold was buried. He had bought it, he said, from a Cuban cigar-maker in Tampa, who in turn pretended to have secured it from his father, who had once sailed with Maximo.

They found the location of the treasure, as set forth upon the chart, and commenced to dig. It was as dark as pitch, the moon had not yet risen. At the most interesting moment, just as their shovel struck—so the story has it—what must have been the lid of a great oaken chest, there arose an infernal uproar at sea. They heard pistol-shots,

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shrieks of horror, curses, and great splashes "when the bodies of the dead pirates struck the water."

According to one of the stories which accompany this buried treasure, Maximo came ashore one night with a chest of gold. Strange ships had been sighted in the offing, and he feared that he might be captured. The treasure was safer on land, buried in the sand above high-water mark. With the pirate chief was the second in command, as bloodthirsty a wretch as Maximo himself, and several members of his crew who, it happened, had recently been mutinous.

Their task of secreting the treasure finished, Maximo and his lieutenant made no bones of shooting the mutinous sailors and rolling their bodies overboard to become the prey of the innumerable sharks which infest those waters, or to be carried by the tides to some one of the sandy islets skirting the shore.

The negro treasure-seekers had heard, it appeared, this story of Maximo's cold-blooded act, for, dropping their tools they fled away up the peninsula as if the devil himself were after them. They never stopped running until they reached the town of St. Petersburg. They were half dead with fright, but thankful that they had been able to get safely away and out of the clutches of the murderous Maximo and his bloodthirsty lieutenant. There is not enough gold in the banks of Tampa to tempt those negroes to renew their search for the buried gold of Maximo. They would not think of again visiting the place in daylight; as for after dark——

In Monroe County, down on the southern coast of Florida, are situated what are known as the Ten Thousand Islands; and, a little farther to the south, another group in the great bay of Ponce de Leon. Nearly all of this part of the State is made up of everglades, of swamps, brackish or salt water lakes, and islets. To attempt a scientific exploration of this region, one would need many things beside instruments for determining the latitude and longitude. Provisions for several weeks would have to be taken along, so great is the danger of becoming lost.

There is a story current of this region to the effect that late one afternoon a hunter and fisherman found himself in a part of the Ten Thousand Islands—a part unknown to him. In fact, he was lost. While looking around for an islet dry enough upon which to camp for the night he came across the "hulk of an old pirate craft." Superstitious and fearful to a degree, the fisherman hesitated to investigate the old vessel. All his life long he had heard stories of mysterious wrecks and long-lost Spanish galleons deeply laden with gold and jewels. He was interested—extremely so—but was afraid to board the old wreck, still—according to his tale—in a fine state of preservation. Finally, after turning tail and fleeing the vicinage of the wreck, the superstitious one came across the deserted hut of a Seminole Indian, where he put up for the night.

Early in the morning, as soon as there was light enough to see, the fisherman got away as expeditiously as possible. Afterward, he said that he feared all sorts of ills, and the vengeance of the dead pirates should he have touched the ship or its contents. It was suggested that the wreck might possibly have been that of a Spanish galleon—not that of a pirate vessel.

"No," was the answer of the frightened native. He said that he knew the wreck was that of a pirate craft, simply because "it looked like one." Little needs to be added.

Down at Myers, not far from the scene of the buried treasure of Gasparilla, they still tell the story of the golden doubloons of Tiger Tail. Tiger Tail was a genuine old Seminole chief, who one day came from the swamps to civilization bearing with him several old Spanish doubloons which he said he had found on a wreck among the Ten Thousand Islands.

Tiger Tail refused to give the location of the wreck, declaring firmly that he did not purpose telling any white man where he could find a store of golden coin. From a numismatic standpoint, Tiger Tail's old coins proved highly desirable, for he sold them to a winter resident who took them north. Then the old Seminole chief returned to his native Everglades, taking with him more money in the shape of good government greenbacks than any South Florida Indian had ever seen before.

Tiger Tail never returned to civilization after his appearance with the old Spanish coins. His death was reported soon afterward. Therefore, it follows that the story of the wreck of the "pirate craft" stranded among the Ten Thousand Islands, as told by the superstitious hunter-fisherman, must

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have been partly true. If not, where did Tiger Tail get his old Spanish gold?

During the early part of the nineteen-hundreds, a party of Spaniards visited Key West in search of a Spanish ship loaded with a great treasure which they said had been carried far into the interior of Florida on the crest of a tidal wave many years ago. It is said that this party searched the region, more or less thoroughly, around the Ten Thousand Islands; and that it also explored the waters and islands of Ponce de Leon Bay. It is understood that this search bore no fruit.

In Key West itself there is an old Conch sponger, who plies his calling in the waters thereabouts, who says he knows where there is a Spanish galleon—"a very large ship." This wreck lies among the keys to the eastward of Key West; and, according to the sponger, it is standing upright on the hard sandy bottom in one of the channels, with less than thirty feet of water over it. It is partly covered with sand, but not too deeply buried to interfere greatly with the work of investigating it.

The sponger claims that he can go to the exact location of the old wreck any day; that it is not far from Key West, some distance from the open sea; and that the water covering the old hulk is seldom troubled by storms or high winds. Furthermore, he claims that he has seen the name of the vessel upon the stern of the wreck; "knows that she holds a cargo of treasure, having traced her, by means of her name, back to her sailing port."

But the canny Conch refuses to give the location to any one, or to sell his information for less than ten thousand dollars. At last accounts he was willing to sell a half interest for that amount of money.

"Then," he is quoted as saying, "I'd go there with a couple of good divers, shovel away the sand, and remove the treasure in short order."

That many treasure-laden Spanish galleons were wrecked along the Florida Keys while dodging pirate craft can scarcely be doubted. That victorious pirates were, for obvious reasons, compelled to seek some lonely key on which to hide their treasure, seems equally reasonable.

Much of the treasure, of the gold, silver, pieces of eight and golden images known to have been taken from the ships of the Spanish, has never been accounted for, either by the pirates themselves or the people of the towns where they often visited to drink, eat and carouse. The mines of Mexico, Central America, and Peru were pouring millions of dollars into the holds of the plate ships. Spain was becoming the richest nation on earth. There were times, however, when the Spnaish grandees and the king himself went into violent rages. News would come that another of the plate fleets had been cut to pieces by some half-naked band of pirates which had swarmed over their high rails like so many enraged wildcats.

What became of the millions that were taken in this manner, no one knows. Part of it has been accounted for in various roundabout ways. Thus, pirate gold built up many of the cities of the Caribbean. But millions of pieces of eight, tons of silver bars, plates and ingots, and thousands of pounds of the red gold of the Incas seems to have disappeared for all time since the ships fell in with the pirates.

Well-authenticated treasure-wrecks just to the eastward of Key West have to do with a most romantic and thrilling story of crime. In the year 1717, Charles Vane, a notorious pirate of West Indian waters, captured about $80,000 in pieces of eight and silver bars that were being taken by divers from one of five plate ships that had gone down in a storm. As fast as the silver was brought to the surface by the divers it was stored

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temporarily in a little fort on the mainland to await the *guardacosta* vessel, which was taking the treasure in instalments to Havana.

Vane learned of this sunken and partly raised treasure, and made a sudden descent upon the fort. He drove off the guard, loaded his own vessel with the bullion and coin, and then sailed out to the vessel from which the divers were working. He captured that ship, and then sailed away, leaving the destitute crew and divers marooned on a small barren key.

Old records in Madrid show that fully three million dollars in bullion must still remain in the holds of these five wrecks off Key West, after allowing for the million that was raised and taken to Havana.

As for the gold secreted upon the keys, and in the bayous and swamps of the mainland of Florida itself, much can be written about it, but little definite information can be given. One sandy Florida key looks as much like another sandy key as one black cat resembles another. Then, again, within the tropics everything changes in short space. Visit a place today, and then return in a year or so. The location can scarcely be recognized. It may be overgrown with tropical foliage and vines; it may have been swept clean by wind and wave.

A chart is of little value—even granted that it may be a genuine document. This statement may be accounted for in this way: After these stores of wealth were buried, many of the pirates feared to return to the scenes of their misdeeds, and found homes in distant lands. There they made charts of the locations where they supposed they had buried their treasure. But in many cases their memories were defective, or they had failed properly to size up the salient points of the location at the time of their visit.

The charts are usually small, scribbled on scraps of soiled paper with a lead pencil as often as not; and the location of the treasure is invariably indicated by a cross disproportionately large; so that even granting that the document is genuine, the precise spot in which to dig is not positively ascertainable; the cross may cover any spot within a radius of a thousand feet. And in treasure-hunting one may just as well miss by a mile as miss by a foot—which may possibly explain why the bulk of the buried and sunken treasure on and off Florida and its keys still remains underground, or underwater, or wherever the elements and the old pirates were responsible for placing it.

THE GREATEST SUNKEN TREASURE IN THE WORLD

DOWN at the bottom of Vigo Bay, a little indentation on the northwest coast of Spain, lies the richest treasure trove in the world. There rest the hulks of seventeen Spanish galleons, sunk to save their burdens of riches when the combined fleets of the Dutch and English, under Lord Ormond and Admiral Rooke, swept down upon them, far back at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Within them are gold ingots, pieces of eight and silver bars, pearls and emeralds and diamonds, wondrously wrought things of precious metals, gems and rare woods—the garnering of three years by Spain in her West Indies during the height of her sovereignty in the New World.

And all this to the sum of $120,000,000!

As fascinating as Stevenson's "Treasure Island" will be the story of the search for this wealth, and more bizarre than any of the dreams of Verne or of Wells are the means to be used to raise the treasure from the bed of the sea. Steel tubes, called by their inventor hydroscopes, will peer down into the waters of Vigo Bay to the decks that have been in darkness for centuries. Flashing up through these tubes will go pictures, the scene of the ocean-bed, the darting, fishes, the ghostly lines of the ships, into a great camera into which men will peer, charting as the scenes flash before them a map of the submerged fleet.

Under this tube, over the sand and about the galleons, will crawl a distorted shape like a huge insect, darting other rays of light. From its front will be thrust long articulated arms with iron claws at their ends, and down into the ancient holds they will be thrust, to be withdrawn, possibly full of treasure. Within, men will work, directing the mechanism that moves the groping claws and lifts them with their loads. Then, from the tremendous tube hanging above their creeping submarine will reach other long steel arms, gripping the chests lifted to them.

Marine elevators will sink down among the galleons, hover about the submarine for a time, and then, distended, will rise

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slowly to the surface, where other men will await them, ready to empty them of their riches.

Strangely enough, too, English Admirals, descendants, in profession at least, of the old bulldogs whose teeth the treasure escaped, are at the head of the movement to salvage the galleons. There are a few earls and persons of rank in the enterprise, also.

For their success they depend upon the marvelous inventions for the exploration of the sea-bottom which are the work of the Cavaliere Giuseppe Pino—the hydroscope, the crawling submarine, and the marine elevators.

There is no question of the galleons being there. They have already been viewed by the members of the expedition, have been photographed, and coins and cannons have been taken from them, just to show that it is no wild-goose chase that is being projected. Spain itself is so convinced of the possibility of recovering their contents that she has granted the English company a royal decree, which gives them the sole right to salvage the ships, with their contents, until the end of the year 1915—and she only insists upon getting twenty per cent. of what is found. As this will leave the seekers a clean hundred million for themselves, they are not objecting.

In the golden age of Spain's history she drew from her mines in the West Indies gold and silver to the value of more than $45,000,000 a year. In 1702 a fleet of galleons brought home the accumulated treasure of some three years, amounting to some $140,000,000 in value, with precious merchandise almost equally valuable. Arrived safely at Vigo Bay, the seventeen Spanish galleons were attacked by the combined English and Dutch fleets, under Admiral Sir George Rooke, and it was to save the contents from falling into the victorious hands of the allies that the galleons were sunk.

The allies, however, secured as booty a sum put down at $2,250,000. Some of the gold and silver was adapted to the national currency in England, and a large number of five-guinea gold pieces, and half-guinea and silver pieces were issued, to the value of about $200,000. A number of commemorative medals also were struck from the captured gold by the order of Queen Anne. The Spaniards succeeded in saving from the enemy a sum estimated at $2,500,000. A fraction of the sunken treasure has been recovered at different times, but not more than $1,500,000. The wealth still remaining at the bottom of Vigo Bay, in gold and silver alone, is fully $120,000,000. In arriving at this figure the specie was reckoned at its value in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Its numismatic value will far exceed those figures.

As soon as the battle ended, attempts were made to recover the wealth by the Spanish Government, who, being unable to attain success, later began to grant special charters to private companies. A succession of attempts were made, the Government at first demanding as much as ninety-five per cent. of all treasure that might be brought from the bay. In 1728 a wealthy Frenchman, Alexandre Goubert, almost succeeded in bringing one of the sunken vessels on shore, but it proved to be a French battleship.

An English expedition under William Evans worked for a year at Vigo, from the end of 1825, and succeeded, with a primitive diving-bell, in rescuing small amounts of silver, cannons, balls, and other objects.

The American Vigo Bay Treasure Company, which after several years followed the latter expedition, succeeded in lifting one of the ships, which, however, went to pieces before it was raised, since it had not been properly strengthened.

When Dr. Carlos L. Iberti, an Italian

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archeologist of note, who has been associated with other of the Cavaliere Pino's work, appeared before capitalists in London, it did not take him long to gain their interest in Vigo Bay. Already this group had formed a company for the raising of certain wrecks, but when the Italian showed them his documents and other proofs of the existence of the ships, everything else went by the board.

An idea of the influences behind the plan can be gained by a glance at the directorate. This includes Rear-Admiral Sir Adolphus Fitz-George, Rear Admiral Charles Windham, the Earl of Oxford, Mr. A. E. Carey, consulting engineer to the Salvage Association; Mr. J. Barr Robertson, director of the Interoceanic Railway of Mexico, Limited; Mr. C. H. Haywood, director of Balchin, Schulz & Co., Limited; Dr. C. L. Iberti, and Cavaliere G. Pino as the consulting engineer.

There is a lure about sunken treasure and pirates' gold that sets even the staidest blood dancing and raises the Jolly Roger in the soul of the most circumspect. The personnel of the directorate of this treasure-hunting syndicate shows this to be a fact.

"But why hasn't anybody been able to get at this tremendous fortune?" Dr. Iberti was asked.

"Because," he answered, "they were never able to go about it right."

Already one of the Spanish galleons has been raised from Vigo Bay, but she chanced to have been laden with merchandise instead of valuables, and her cargo was long since ruined. A list of the articles recovered is given by Doctor Iberti as follows: "anchors, including that of the *Misericordia* of Santa Cruz, guns of different caliber, wood of various kinds, thirty gun-carriages, wheels, mortars, silver spoons, mariner's compass, enormous cables, innumerable balls and bombs, statuettes of inlaid gold, magnificently engraved pipe-holders, Mexican porcelain *tortas*, or plates of silver, some weighing as much as eighty pounds; gold pieces stamped by the Royal Mint of Mexico and ingots from Peru."

And right here belongs the story of how this expedition is going about it. It was almost solely because of these means that the Spanish Government has allowed the attempts to be made.

Chief of the inventions is the hydroscope, which might be described as a unique water-telescope, although it is really much more than that.

Heretofore the greatest obstacle in the way of submarine work and research has been the fact that no form of light known would penetrate the intense darkness of the ocean a few fathoms below the surface.

But the hydroscope is a thing apart from all others known. Imagine a floating platform, somewhat like the deck of a submarine, so large that on it twenty men can stand at a time. From this floating platform descends for one hundred feet an immense telescope steel tube eight feet in diameter, and from which also depends a series of smaller tubes of a telescopic nature. The tube may be lengthened or shortened.

At the end is an enlargement, a complete optical chamber, which is in itself a kind of camera, provided with a most intricate system of powerful lenses and reflectors that allow objects within a distance of two thousand square yards to be distinctly seen in the reflecting mirrors above. Out from just above this chamber are a series of mechanical arms which, in action, resemble the tentacles of an octopus. Immense windows of thick glass-like gigantic bull's-eyes stud this lower chamber, and from these pour a flood of light.

It is, in fact, a telescope, a complicated one, but pointed downward into coral caverns or sunken ships instead of upward at the sun or the stars. Its complex system of lenses, twelve in number, answer to the objective glass of a celestial telescope. Together with the internal mirrors, they produce a clear picture of the sea-bottom, the rays of light passing up the tube to the sort of camera-obscura house at the top, which floats above the surface.

Down into the camera chamber one man can go to arrange the mechanism, but no man could stay there when the lights are turned on. This mechanism floats or is anchored above the parts of the sea-bed to be examined. It is the locater or tester of this amazing expedition.

But the hydroscope would be of limited use without companion mechanism for recovering the treasure. And here comes in the "submarine worker," the weirdest looking affair since Mr. Wells invented the walking machines of his Martians in "The War of the Worlds." In shape it is like an elongated egg or a fat insect, a little over nine feet in diameter.

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It is designed to resist the enormous pressures that increase with every foot below a depth of one hundred feet, has a record of eighty fathoms, and is so constructed that it can work at any of these depths as easily as upon the surface. The boat is built of steel so cunningly fabricated that the hull is as solid as if made of a single piece. To the eye, however, the boat, with its slender arms, is not unlike a gigantic flea.

These arms are very ingenious features. They pass into the boat through watertight universal joints that permit them to be moved in any direction, and on the ends of the arms are claw-like hands that can be controlled well-nigh as perfectly as one's fingers.

When the boat reaches the bottom it is able to travel along the ocean-bed. For this purpose there is a single heavy wheel just under the keel upon which she will rest, and to give her motion there is a small propeller at the stern which is driven by an electric motor within the craft. The submarine is at all times in telephonic communication with the surface vessel from which the big automatic dredges are controlled.

The essentials are the elevators, consisting of several cylinders made of rubber-coated canvas, into which compressed air is pumped, each cylinder capable of raising forty tons out of the water, or any heavier weight, according to the size of the cylinder; mechanical arms to embrace the hull which is to be salved, or to pass cables beneath a keel when the wreck is weak, and "pyro-pontoons," each one capable of bearing practically any weight. Once raised from the water by the pyro-pontoons, a ship may be considered as in dock, with her hull in the natural position on the water, so that operations for repairing her may be carried out on the spot.

With all these the treasure ships will probably be raised.

A series of experiments recently were carried out in Vigo Bay with Pino's inventions. The machinery was set up on board a fine yacht, the *San Clemente*, and the people of Vigo, the newspapers and the political and municipal authorities followed the search with the utmost interest and gave every support, while the Government assisted the work with one of the finest of its destroyers, the *Audaz*.

The first work was to study the sea-bed, to locate the ships with the help of the hydroscope, to find their names and dimensions, to note the quality of the bottom, and to discover the currents and measure their force—in short, to make all preliminary observations for a grand assault on the treasure. By way of experiment, several cannons were raised to the surface, and a quantity of wood was recovered, so well preserved as to resemble stone.

The wood in the ships, by the way, will be almost as valuable as the gold. There were stores of oak and rosewood in some. These, it has been found, have been made almost as hard as iron by the action of the sea-water, and are perfectly preserved. Don Montero Rios, president of the Upper House in Spain, has had a bed made of it. From time to time daring divers from the Vigo Bay neighborhood have made descents, coming to the surface with little trophies, now and then a coin or two, but not enough to make them wealthy.

The richest of the ships, which has been called "the Monmouth Galleon," has never been touched. It lies in rather deep water on the Los Castros rock. Even this treasure-house, however, Doctor Iberti considers within reach of the metal arms of the submarine.

And that is how the greatest treasure lure of all old Spain, and indeed, of all the world, is being assailed. At any moment we are quite likely to hear of the success of the syndicate, for it is well equipped and backed, and the bullion-laden galleons are by no means a myth.

THE TREASURE-GALLEON *SANTA MARGHERITA*

OF THE scores of once stately craft which dot the shallow floor of the Spanish Main, none is more tempting than the wreck of the *Santa Margherita*. Upon the 23d of September, 1597, the galleon set sail from the port of Santo Domingo, treasure-laden, for Spain. Her captain, Don Juan de Baca, had been entrusted by the governor of Santo Domingo with one of the greatest cargoes of gold, silver and precious stones, ever sent back to old Spain from the New World. Conservative estimates have appraised the value of her freight as being worth at least seven millions of dollars.

Scarcely had the ship entered the Mona

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Passage between the islands of Santo Domingo and Porto Rico than she was caught in a violent southeasterly hurricane, and driven in a northwesterly direction straight toward the treacherous reefs and coral shoals of the Bahamas. When the captain saw that his ship was doomed, he placed a valuable chest of gold images and jewels into one of his small boats, manned it with his trusted mate and a picked crew, and bade them seek safety, if they could, by rowing back to Santo Domingo or making one of the smaller nearby islands.

Captain de Baca himself and the greater part of the crew stayed by the ship, and were drowned. The small boat's crew, seeing that their only salvation lay in lightening their small craft, soon threw overboard the treasure-chest. They finally made a landing upon Turk's Island, and after the gale had subsided rowed back to Santo Domingo, bearing the news of the lost treasure-ship.

During the hundreds of years that have elapsed since that time, repeated efforts have been made to locate the lost ship, but up to the present writing, without substantial results.

The story of the lost treasure had almost become a myth, when it was revived and verified in a most startling manner. It seems that shortly after the Spanish-American War an English diver by the name of Layman, of Kingston, Jamaica, was employed by the United States War Department to go down and pick up a cut cable between the Island of Santo Domingo and the Bahamas.

While walking along the sandy bed of the ocean, exploring for the cable, Layman suddenly came upon the rotting hulk of an old galleon. In the clear shallow water every detail of the wreck was plainly visible to the diver. Rounding her stern, Layman saw her name.

It was the *Santa Margherita*, the lost treasure-ship!

Thereupon the diver signaled hastily to be drawn up, and when the helmet was removed he was seen to be extremely pale and nervous. He pleaded illness, kept his own counsel, and made no more descent until the following day.

But in the meantime he ascertained from the ship's navigator a comparatively accurate location on the chart of the spot where he had found the galleon. Then he continued his work for the Government as if nothing unusual had happened.

As soon as possible after his contract with the Government had terminated, Layman came to the United States and sought to form a company to recover the sunken treasure. At first, the diver's story was disbelieved by all to whom he told it; then, after a lapse of nearly ten years, he succeeded in organizing an expedition.

The work of discovery was to be carried on in a very systematic way by corporation, called the Southern Research Company. The principal members of the company were able-bodied, red-blooded Harvard graduates. Chartering the old cup-defender, *Mayflower*, they converted her into an auxiliary steamer, and sailed southward in mid-September, 1908.

Curiously enough, when almost at the spot marked on the diver's chart indicating the location of the *Santa Margherita*, the *Mayflower* was caught in just such a hurricane as wrecked the galleon more than three centuries before. After being driven before the gale for three days and nights, the helpless yacht, dismasted and with bowsprit snapped short off, was sighted by a fruit steamer, and the little party taken off.

Scarcely had the unlucky *Mayflower* gone adrift as a derelict, than a company of Englishmen at Kingston, Jamaica, chartered a stout schooner and fitted her up to prosecute the search for the Spanish treasure. After a short reconnoitering cruise she returned to Montego Bay, and in spite of the secrecy enjoined upon the members of the crew it was learned that divers employed by the British expedition actually found some old Spanish coins while hunting for the wreck. From this, believing that these coins were a part of the treasure cast overboard by the mate, it was conjectured that the wreck itself could not be far away.

After the Englishmen had made several unsuccessful cruises to the supposed location of the sunken galleon, they gave the project up in disgust. Thus, at the present time—unless the Americans still have faith enough in Layman's chart to engage a larger craft—would-be-seekers of the unlucky *Santa Margherita* have a clear field before them.

That the wreck is located between Puerto Plata and Turk's Island, there can be very little doubt, for but a few years ago a party of native divers brought into Kingston five thousand dollars worth of old Spanish coins

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picked up in shallow water near Puerto Plata. These coins are believed to be a part of the valuables thrown overboard from the small boat of the treasure-ship.

All these stories tend to confirm the general belief that the galleon is sunk in the region above mentioned. West Indian waters outside of the harbors are remarkably clear, the bottom oftentimes being visible at extreme depths. Thus, with a well organized and equipped expedition, it would seem to be merely a matter of capital and patience standing between the old wreck and its re-discovery.

From old records in Madrid, it has been learned that most of the treasure aboard the *Santa Margherita* consisted of gold gathered from the natives of the West Indies and Central America. Some of this the Spaniards had melted into bullion, while still more of it was probably in the original forms in which the natives wrought it—rings, bracelets and other ornaments.

Should this treasure ever be found, it is expected that it will be sought eagerly by antiquarians and collectors, that it will bring far more than its intrinsic bullion value.

Who can deny but that twentieth-century methods, plus American grit and patience, will one day raise the precious cargo of the *Santa Margherita?*

THE "KING'S FIFTH" OFF SANTIAGO DE CUBA

IF THE day ever arrives when capitalists care to equip a submarine, and thoroughly explore the bed of the Caribbean Sea just off Santiago de Cuba, it is possible that the remains of an old galleon may be discovered. The records are authentic. The loss of the treasure ship took place "within sight of the observers on the bluffs of Santiago."

It was 1560 when this galleon touched at Santiago. She was a stout ship in the Spanish royal service, commanded by one Don Sebastian Jiménez. On her way to Spain with the "king's fifth"—the royal perquisite of those days—from a very rich silver mine on board, she had just left Santiago, and was bearing up for the Windward Passage, when a violent tempest arose.

Driven irresistibly toward shore, Don Sebastian dropped his anchors, but the storm was not to be cheated. The vessel was torn from her moorings and driven upon the rocks. Clouds of spray, whipped up from the sea, hid further details from the watchers on shore, but as neither the captain nor any of his men were seen again, there is but very little doubt but that the ship and all hands were lost.

In addition to twelve tons of bar silver on board this galleon, the records in Madrid show that she carried an immense quantity of personal treasure in the shape of gold and precious stones, the property of merchants homeward-bound upon other craft, who thought that their shipments would be safer aboard a ship in the royal service.

In so far as can be learned, no search has ever been made for this lost treasure-ship. That she was riven on the rocks "within sight of the observers on the bluffs of Santiago," would seem to be a significant statement, inasmuch as it would narrow the field of search. That—aside from the twelve tons of silver—this wreck is worth searching for, would seem to be borne out by the "immense quantity of personal treasure" on board. Spain's rule in the New World was a rapacious and cruel one, her citizens greedy and grasping. Hence, if this royal galleon bore the personal treasure of Spanish merchants homeward-bound upon other craft, she must have indeed carried a precious freight.

There, apparently, somewhere within gunshot of the waters immortalized by Sampson and Schley, lies the husk of this old-time royal galleon, a princely lure for the bold sub-mariner who will conduct a patient search.

$20,000,000 IN THIRTY-TWO SALVABLE WRECKS

TO THE round of rubber company prospectuses which for the last few years has been almost the sole reading matter of the average Englishman, was recently added that of a company which has been formed to engage in the recovery of "specie, bullion, tin, copper and other metals" from wrecks lying around the

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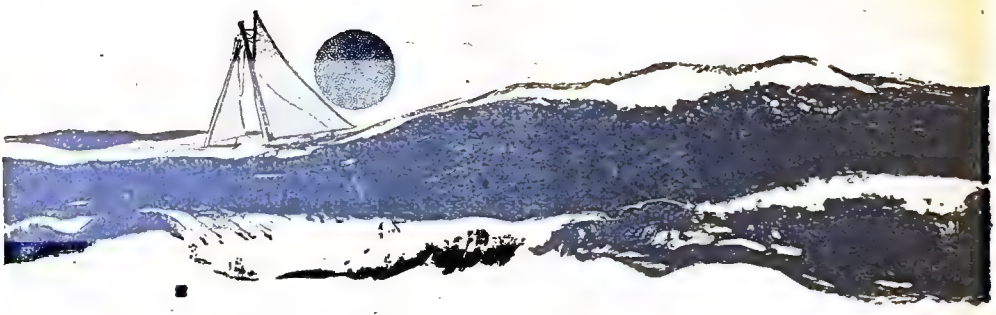

coasts of South Africa. The company lays particular stress upon the fact that it will not engage itself in "treasure hunting," but will occupy itself in the work of the "salvage of the above-named junk, and the recovery of the contents of the wrecks aforesaid, which have already been located, and in many instances surveyed."

Previous to the opening of the Suez Canal, in 1870, all British transports and East Indiamen made the voyage to and from the East by way of the Cape of Good Hope. Many were wrecked. Most of these wrecks lie close to the shore, and all attempts to salve their contents were, until quite recently, attended by great, and in most cases, insuperable difficulties, owing to the inefficiency of diving and salving apparatus and the practical impossibility of removing the sand with which most vessels submerged for some years are covered.

During the last few years, however, great strides have been made in perfecting diving apparatus, and it is now practicable to work at a much greater depth than was heretofore possible. At the same time the introduction of the powerful centrifugal pumps now available, renders it possible to remove large quantities of sand in a very short time.

An experienced mariner and master salver, Captain Gardiner, now working on the *Lutine*, is to superintend the operations on the wrecks. Evidently they are plentiful off South Africa, for it is stated that after an exhaustive search in the archives of Cape Colony the captain selected no fewer than one hundred and eighty-seven of the more valuable and accessible wrecks, and succeeded during the course of seven years, at an expenditure of $20,000, in locating thirty-two of them. Of these he has actually surveyed sixteen and recovered property from four of them.

The Government of the Cape of Good Hope has granted licenses to work these vessels, subject to a royalty of fifteen per cent. of the value of property recovered.

In his report Captain Gardiner says:

"Although I have been able to ascertain the whereabouts and values of thirty-two wrecks, exhibiting assets representing a sum exceeding $20,000,000, I should mention that I am in a position to locate other wrecks, many of which offer to the recoverer prizes whose worth should figure at hundreds of thousands of pounds sterling.

"I will not enter upon a detailed statement concerning the thirty-two wrecks to which I refer, but will confine myself to making mention of four.

"No. 1 Wreck: It is recorded and corroborated in a report from the captain of this ship to directors of the East India Company that her cargo embraced, among other things, seven hundred and twenty bars of gold, one thousand four hundred bars of silver, nine boxes of precious stones and specie, the reputed aggregate value of which is calculated to exceed $5,000,000. The assets should be recovered with great facility and with less difficulty than from most of the other submerged vessels.

"She lies in from three and a half to four and a half fathoms of water. The hull is intact, and thus her contents are easily available. Modern centrifugal pumps would extract the whole of the sand contained within her in from one to two months. It would be necessary, however, to construct a stage built on piles and erected over the place where she lies—a task easy of accomplishment. On this stage the men could be housed and motor-pumps and diving-gear operated. The total cost of salvage should not exceed $35,000.

"No. 2 Wreck: This vessel is in a good salving position. Her contents, according to evidence of a thoroughly reliable nature, were valued at $1,000,000. I estimate that the greater part of the specie could be

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recovered in six months at a maximum cost of $35,000.

"No. 3 Wreck: The worth of the contents of this vessel represents a value of more than $3,500,000 in specie. She lies in twelve fathoms of water, on an ocean bed, covered by kelp. I am certain that with a few expert divers and a good, up-to-date plant the greater portion could be recovered at a cost of $60,000 in a period of six months, as there is no sand to extract from this ship.

"No. 4 Wreck: This vessel is in a similar position to the one stated above. She is in five fathoms of water and is filled with sand. From the investigation of authorized records I have ascertained she was carrying $4,000,000 in specie when lost; her bell and two other articles, easily accessible, were recovered. She would have to be worked in a similar way to No. 1. I estimate that in ordinary weather the expense of recovery would be under $30,000, and the time occupied in this operation should not be over six months."

TWENTY-FIVE OTHER SUBMARINE PRIZES

NOT long since, the Spanish steamship *Alfonso XII* foundered in deep water near the Canary Islands. Part of her cargo consisted of ten boxes of gold, each containing ten thousand pounds sterling. After some delay, divers were sent out with the latest appliances, and nine out of the ten boxes of specie were brought up. Every attempt to locate the tenth chest was utterly futile, so that a fortune seems irrevocably lost.

A Dutch bark, the *Maria Theresa*, sank fifty-five years ago in Goree Gateway, near Helvoetslius, on the coast of Holland. Her hull has recently been found, and some boatloads of her cargo of tin have been brought up by divers.

The schooner-yacht *Star of the Sea*, belonging to Sir A. H. Dendy, of Torquay, was sunk on the Banjaard Bank, Zeeland Coast, on July 5, 1870. After an immersion of nineteen years, an iron safe containing fifty pounds sterling and a gold watch-chain has been recovered from this wreck, together with two small guns and twenty-two pigs of lead ballast.

A company has succeeded in gaining some relics of the French frigate *Danae* of fifty-six guns, which was destroyed near Trieste, seventy-eight years ago, by an explosion in her powder-magazine, when her crew of six hundred men were hurled headlong into eternity. This find will throw some light on the construction and armament of the warships of a century ago.

Some Danish speculators are reaping a harvest of golden grain from the depths of the sea which washes the coast of Jutland. Some years previously, the British steamship *Helen*, laden with copper, had foundered. All her cargo has been recovered; and it is probable that her machinery will follow, as the accumulation of sand in which the hull was imbedded, has now disappeared.

A Russian frigate, the *Alexander Nevsky*, which was lost in 1868, has yielded twenty thousand pounds of brass. The sand which covered her has been scoured away, and an attempt will be made to get out her engines.

The British steamer *Westdale*, laden with two thousand tons of iron, went down off the Danish coast in 1888. Nearly the whole cargo, her machinery, and great part of her fittings have been salved by these Jutland speculators.

Dredging operations at Santander, Spain, have resulted in the discovery of the well-preserved wreck of a war-ship of the fifteenth or sixteenth century. She must have been in her present position for four hundred years, and was partly covered by a deposit of sand and mud. Divers have brought up guns which bear the united arms of Castile and Aragon, the scroll of Isabella, and the crown and initial of Ferdinand.

This ship would appear to have been employed as a transport, and, inasmuch as some of the arms are of French and Italian make, it is supposed that she formed part of the fortunate expedition against Naples under Gonzalo de Cordoba. She probably foundered while entering the port of Santander on her return from Italy, laden with trophies and plunder. Among the coins recovered are some bearing the image and superscription of Charles VII. of France, and others, issued by various contemporary Italian states.

The ship *Madagascar* left Melbourne for England in 1853 with a large amount of bullion on board. Nothing definite has ever been heard of her since she was seen from Port Phillip Heads, steering a course for home.

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Piracy and many other more or less improbable causes have been advanced to account for her disappearance. Some speculators, however, left Sydney for New Zealand in 1899 to seek this long-lost ship and treasure, but the expedition was unsuccessful. A recently discovered wreck is supposed to be the one in question.

Another expedition recently sailed for the west coast of Africa to attempt the recovery of the specie, gold-dust, and ivory from the wreck of the steamship *Gambia*, which struck on a sunken reef near Cape Palmas and went to the bottom about thirty-five years ago. It is the belief of the promoters of this scheme, that the steamer's safe containing the valuables is still intact. A diver is reported to have salved two thousand pounds' worth of ivory; but death had claimed him before he could reach the safe.

Divers are exploring the bed of the ocean near Galley Head, on the south coast of Ireland, in search of the wreck of the steamship *Crescent City*, which sank in sixteen fathoms of water about 1869. Her treasure in specie amounted to fifty thousand pounds sterling. Divers succeeded with great difficulty in raising sixteen thousand pounds of this amount; but they failed to reach the remainder of this treasure. A Mr. O'Hara, of Liverpool, who surveyed the *Crescent City* shortly after she foundered, is said to have purchased the hull from the underwriters as it now lies under water. He is of the opinion that the chance of salvage will be much greater now in consequence of the breaking-up of the vessel.

An English ship sank with all hands and a valuable cargo about one hundred and fifty years since, near Danzig, Germany. Even now, the spot where she disappeared is known as "Englishman's Road." Several unsuccessful attempts have been made to find her position. Some time ago, divers, searching for amber, fell in with the submerged hull of a vessel believed to be the much-sought-after merchantman, but if the treasure was raised, the finders kept quiet about it.

The Aboukir Bay Treasure Recovery Company was formed several years ago for the purpose of recovering treasure from the ship *L'Orient*, and other war-vessels belonging to the French, which sank at the Battle of the Nile. Divers have salved many articles, but a claim has been made by the French Government, and Egypt has appointed an overseer on behalf of France. The Khedive visited the scene of operations. Property worth twenty thousand pounds is said to have been recovered, but the much-coveted gold has not yet been won. As no fewer than three steamers and many experienced divers were engaged on the work, the expenses must have been heavy.

Somewhere along the western coast of Madagascar lies the wreck of a Dutch-built ship stranded upon the rocks. Much gold and silver money has been washed from her and strewn along the beach. There is very little doubt but that a large fortune still rests within her timbers, and, a little capital and perseverance should result in the recovery of the bulk of the treasure.

A daring attempt is now being made to recover treasure worth $1,250,000, which was plunged half a century ago fourteen fathoms deep in the waters that flood an almost inaccessible cave in the South Seas. The treasure is the bullion carried by the sailing ship *General Grant*, whose wreck off the Auckland Islands, on May 14, 1866, remained one of those unsolved mysteries of the sea until chance led to the rescue of a few survivors two years after the disaster. Dashed against a cliff four hundred feet high, the vessel was swept into the cave at its base, and here she has remained ever since, eighty feet below the surface of the water. Here the vessel has defied the efforts of five well-equipped salvage expeditions to reach her.

To Victor Berge, an Englishman, it has been left to utilize another method of approach. Mr. Berge is steeplejack and diver by turns. His knowledge of both trades will be utilized by himself and the twelve companions who have cast their fortunes with his in the search for wealth.

From the top of the perpendicular wall of rock four hundred feet high, Berge expects to lay sectional ladders to the lip of the cave. This perilous work accomplished, his plan is to build a hanging track into the cave suspended from its roof by means of lewises, fastened one after another into holes drilled in the roof of the cave by pneumatic drills, worked by air-compressors erected on the cliff above. From this track will be erected a movable platform capable of being directed over any part of the wreck. Air-pumps, telephones, and other diving apparatus will be carried on this platform, from

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which all operations will be directed. To combat the risk of strain to or fouling of air-tube and life-line, which is inevitable in such surging waters, Mr. Berge is going to dive through a steel tube. Supported by adjustable guys from the roof of the cave, the tube will be capable of being moved to any part of the wreck.

Thirty-five miles south-southwest of Ngoncy Island on the east coast of Madagascar, lies the wreck of the French frigate *Glorie*. She was lost in 1761, and is said to have carried much treasure on board. According to the chart the water is shallow at this point and, should the wreck once be definitely located, little difficulty should be experienced in raising some of the treasure.

At Mount's Bay, off the coast of Cornwall, lies the wreck of the treasure-ship *St. Andrew*, once the property of the King of Portugal. While on her way from Flanders to Portugal during the year of 1526, she was driven out of her course and wrecked. According to an old document written by Thomas Porson, a passenger on board, "By the grace and mercy of God, the greater part of the crew got safely to land, and, assisted by some of the inhabitants, they also saved part of the cargo, including blocks of silver bullion, silver vessels and plate, precious stones, brooches and chains of gold, cloth of Arras, tapestry, satins, velvets, and four sets of armor for the King of Portugal; but no sooner had these treasures been carried to the top of the cliffs, than three local squires, with sixty armed retainers, attacked the shipwrecked men and carried off the booty."

Much doubt has been cast upon this Porson document, owing to another statement extant—that of one St. Aubyn, one of the squires involved. According to this gentleman, the squires rode to the place to render assistance, but the treasure could not be saved.

Near Cape Vidal, on the coast of Zuzuland, is the wreck of a mysterious sailing vessel, the *Dorothea*. An immense fortune in gold bricks is said to have been cemented under the decks of the vessel. This was all gold stolen from the mines of the Rand district. In 1900 the Natal Parliament passed an item authorizing the expenditure of a little over 173 pounds sterling in connection with a search for this gold. Several syndicates have been formed to raise this treasure, but up to the present writing it has not been located. That this treasure-wreck is an actuality is evident in that the British colony financed a search for it, and when governments go treasure hunting, they must have something definite to work upon.

The recovery of $2,000,000 in valuables, of which $500,000 is in bar silver, from the wreck of the Ward Liner *Merida*, sunk off the coast of Virginia several months ago in a collison with the steamer *Admiral Farragut*, a fruit liner, is the herculean job that Captain Charles Williamson of Norfolk, Va., President of the Williamson Submarine Corporation, has contracted to perform.

Not only that, but he is confident, despite the fact that the *Merida* rests in three hundred or more feet of water, that he will accomplish the job with his submarine flexible tube-caisson. The company is now actively engaged in the work, and in all probability, ere this appears in print, much of the silver will have been recovered.

Captain Williamson is the inventor of the apparatus, which has been on the market for several years, and experts have declared that it will do all that is claimed in the way of making submarine explorations easy and comparatively safe. For months the apparatus has been installed on a barge, and practical demonstrations of the work shown. But the decision of Captain Williamson to undertake the recovery of the valuables that went down with the *Merida*, is the first deep-sea job that has ever been attempted.

It is, nevertheless, undertaken with confidence by the inventor. The delay in beginning operations is due to the fact that it will be necessary to equip a sea-going vessel for the purpose of working a hundred miles or more off the coast.

So far as hundreds of interested ship-owners and others are concerned, who have

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examined the submarine flexible tube-caisson, it seems to fulfil all promises made. In varying depths of water in the Elizabeth River and Hampton Roads, the apparatus has been operated, and persons descending have found it feasible to examine the bottom of the river for dozens of feet in every direction.

It is also possible for operators to handle chains, hooks and other instruments necessary for the making of repairs below water, or to attach them to objects it was desired to bring up to the surface of the water. The simplicity of the apparatus impresses one on examination. At the same time its strength, the inside collapsible part being made of malleable iron, is wonderful.

The collapsible part consists of a flexible waterproof tube that maintains at all times an open-air shaft from the bottom to the top, connecting the floating caisson on the surface of the water with the heavy caisson at the end of the tube that is projected downward into the water. On the outside it is covered with waterproof material.

The iron flexible and collapsing tubes are constructed in a wedge formation, and the greater the pressure on the outside the more the wedges get into play and make the air-shaft safe from collapsing. It is practically impossible to entirely close the air-shaft, for this very reason.

The interior arrangements of the tube are such that workmen can readily descend, as on a ladder; and the caisson at the bottom, made large enough to contain several men, gives plenty of room for operations below the surface of the water. The tubing and caisson are readily movable by signals. The tubing, when not in use, collapses to one-fourth its normal length and comes in sections, providing for storing when not otherwise employed. The rings of the tubing, to be more explicit, are connected by hinged cast-iron rings, connected by iron links that collapse and fold inward, the same as an accordion or bellows. Collapse them as far as possible, and you have a solid ring about five inches wide that is as solid as iron can be.

The interior of the chamber is, of course, lighted by electricity, for the benefit of the workmen, and the men work under normal atmospheric conditions. The proposition of lighting the water is an easy one, and is done by means of electric searchlights on the outside of the chamber.

The sunken Ward Line steamer *Merida*, upon which Captain Williamson will operate, was sent to the bottom by the *Admiral Farragut*, a fruiter, in a collision sixty-five miles southeast of Cape Charles. The *Farragut* was able to reach port, but was badly damaged. The 260 passengers aboard the *Merida* were all saved.

To the bottom of the sea, with the *Merida*, went $500,000 in bar silver as well as the valuables of the passengers and a big cargo of merchandise. It is estimated that the recoverable property will amount to $2,000,000. It is the reclamation of this property and silver that Captain Williamson will undertake.

The steamer *Golden Gate* still lies at the bottom of the Pacific off Manzanillo, Mexico, with $7,600,000 in gold on board, all in one big express safe. Shifting sands have interfered with all efforts so far looking to the recovery of this fortune; but who can say that the diver's grappling hooks will never one day clutch this rusty steel chest with its precious store of gold?

Even in these days, treasure-ships still sink, for the Canadian Pacific steamship *Islander* lies in one hundred and eighty feet of water just off Juneau, Alaska, and it is a well-known fact that she still holds a valuable cargo of bullion.

Other sunken steamers with valuable cargoes are worthy of mention. Thus, the steamer *San Pedro*, sunk in Cumana Bay, Venezuela, is reported to have had $2,000,000 in gold and silver on board; and the steamer *Lexington* carried $300,000 in coin to the bottom of Long Island Sound.

And, finally, the hulk of the *Titanic* might be considered. Probably no diver will ever reach this wreck, which lies two miles deep in mid-Atlantic, where the water-pressure reaches the tremendous force of nearly five thousand pounds to the square inch; but it is easily possible that some of the inventors now working out the main problems involved will reap rich rewards from wrecks yet to be discovered at depths up to a thousand feet.

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THE CAMP-FIRE

A Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers.

THOSE of you who applied to join Algot Lange's third expedition to the Amazon will be especially interested in this letter from him to me:

August 6, 1915,
New York.

I am writing this letter to you on the eve of my departure for my Third Amazon Expedition, as I am leaving on the SS. *Stephen* for Para at the mouth of the Amazon.

Your cooperation through the medium of your magazine and its Camp-Fire department has proven of inestimable value to me in getting in touch with the kind of men that come under the category of real men.

YOU are well acquainted with the facts concerning my Amazon Expedition, its scope, object and character, and you have realized as well as I do that the men who may prove of sufficient physical and mental resistance to withstand the effects of the Amazonian climate are few and far between.

I have received a total of 381 letters and inquiries from your readers. I am sincerely flattered by this attention from men who so sincerely desire to join my exploring outfit, because it proves to me that there are a great many red-corpuscled lads who are willing to go with me till the Amazon freezes over and then skate with me on the ice.

IT HAS been a physical impossibility for me to answer these letters. It will no doubt create a suspicion in the minds of some of my correspondents about the genuineness of your editorial notices about me, as they never received any acknowledgment of their inquiries to me, even though they enclosed a stamped envelope, and therefore I wish to speak out and assure the men that their letters have all been received and read, but will remain unanswered for a while.

It is in the nature of my future work on the Amazon, where I expect to stay indefinitely, that I will need men and perhaps a good many men. No place on earth are men so well fitted physically and mentally to cope successfully with the ravages of the Amazonian climate as in the U. S., and perhaps nowhere so well locally as from the West.

LET me finish by stating that I want to hear from every man who reads the *Adventure* and who is ready or could be made ready to join me sooner or later, and that such men as write me should not be disappointed because they do not hear from me right away. I keep every letter on file, "watchfully waiting" for the opportunity when I shall need men who can stand heat, humidity, uncertain food-supply depending upon how handy they are with their hardware; men who can stand isolation in a great big wilderness and who appreciate the necessity of discipline. To such men I will give a percentage in my business of exploitation of natural resources and give them such times, such adventures and experiences as will either make or break them. But it is the big, clean and healthy Western type that I need, one who smokes but only uses "licker" as an occasional medicine. Ask them to write to me care of the U. S. Consulate, Para, Brazil, and ask them to give me information, not asking *me* for the information.

The *Adventure* Magazine remains as the only recreative literature on my expedition.

ALGOT LANGE

A FEW months ago a copy of *Adventure* was found in Craonne, by an American in the Foreign Legion, when the French retook that village from the Germans. Other copies have been found in strange, out-of-the-way places—hundreds of miles back in the Canadian wilderness, in remote islands of the South Sea, by-places in Central and South America, Russia, Africa, Australia, everywhere. Who can give us the most interesting adventure of an *Adventure*? Who can tell us of the copy that has wandered farthest and longest, passed through the most hands, had the strangest experiences?

SOME of you have made long trips—in the Everglades, the West, or in foreign lands—solely to get your copy of *Adventure*. Who of you has made the longest, hardest journey to get it? Who has paid the most for a single copy? So far as I can remember, the record on the latter point is held by the comrade who paid a dollar and a bag of Bull Durham for a copy in the interior of Cuba. Can any of you take that record away from him?

Letters along these lines ought to bring some very interesting reading to the rest of

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us Camp-Fire members. If you have a claim to a record on any of these points, send it in to hold the fort against the assaults of friendly rivals.

OF "The Hawk and the White Elephant" in this issue, Ross Ellis writes:

The only basis for the yarn, as I told you quite a while ago, is the fact that there is (or was) a freakish lot of Southern iron that kicked around on the market long enough to become known in some offices as "The White Elephant." No punishment could be too severe for the crime of selling junk like that to a steel foundry, and no punishment could be much worse than to dump it back on the seller's hands.

RED-HEADS, ATTENTION!

MAYBE you think this is going to be a joke. It isn't.

Red-headed men have always been regarded as having more than their share of the fighting spirit. Show me ten red-heads and I'll venture that nine out of that ten will be more than able to hold their own in any kind of fighting that calls for dash, spirit, fire, and fierce tenacity.

This country is at last waking up to the fact that the day may come when it will need nothing so much as good fighting-men. We have a rather dreary way of naming our regiments in war-time—the 40th U. S. Infantry, the 224th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, the 35th Massachusetts Volunteer Cavalry, etc., etc. Once in a long while some regiment gains a really distinctive name of its own, like the Louisiana Tigers of the Civil War, the Rough Riders, etc. But for the most part they fight along, perhaps through years of war, with no more distinctive designation than a number. And one number among many numbers is hard to remember. The English follow another custom, and their Borderers, Dublin Fusiliers, Black Watch, etc., cling in the memory and gain fame from generation to generation.

YET in all the history of the world, there has never been a regiment with so distinctive a name as would be that of the Red-Headed Regiment, the "Red-Heads." Yes, there is a laugh in it. There is generally a grin whenever a red-head is mentioned in any connection. Nobody knows exactly why, and it doesn't matter anyhow. But when it is a question of fighting, there isn't so much grinning, particularly by the unfortunate gentlemen who have to fight *against* the red-heads. For red-heads are notoriously good fighters.

Very well, then, let's organize a regiment composed exclusively of red-heads. If war comes to this country it is a safe bet that no other regiment or battery, regulars, militia or volunteers, will be followed with such keen interest or become so endeared to the general public as will the Red-Headed Regiment, the Red-Heads.

We of the Camp-Fire started and organized the American Legion, now numbering many thousands of men trained for war and ready for instant service at our country's call. It will be far easier to organize a single regiment. There are a good many red-headed men in the United States. Never before has there been a chance for them to get together. When they do get together they will be known and acclaimed from one end of the country to the other. And when it comes to the fighting they will fight like ——.

RED-HEADS, send in your names! We'll register your names here in this office until the regiment is sufficiently filled out to have its own organization. We'll use application-blanks like those of the American Legion, for these have been worked out carefully to the highest pitch of practical effectiveness by military experts. We'll make it a regiment complete in every detail of complement, from colonel to surgeons and chaplain, machine-gun men and all. I think we'll have no difficulty whatever in getting what backing may be needed. If we can, we'll make it a regiment ready to respond, fully prepared, at the first call to arms.

We want men who have had previous training with army, navy, militia, military school, or irregular fighting in any part of the globe. This magazine is the "trade-paper" of the adventurers and the adventurous, and therefore reaches the cream of this country's fighting-men. But we'll take red-heads who have had no military training. Out of them we'll make a second battalion, a reserve. They will be needed. A regiment at the front needs its reserve to draw upon, and we mustn't fill out this regiment's ranks with any but red-heads. The reserve battalion can go into training when the active battalion takes the field.

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MOST volunteer organizations go on the rocks when it comes to electing their officers. To avoid that, to keep out all politics, "pull," etc., a board of regular Army officers will be asked to investigate the actual qualifications of the men and from them select those best fitted for officers, choosing them for *merit only*. (No, none of us in this office is red-headed, so don't dig up baseless suspicions. This magazine will have no voice in the affairs of the Red-Headed Regiment. It will do what it can to help, but that is all.)

Send in your names, Red-Heads! We'll not only make it the best-known regiment in the country, but we'll make it one that will deserve all the fame that comes to it. Make any suggestions that occur to you. Send in the name and address of every red-headed man you know who will make a good soldier and do his share in upholding the honor of the "Red-Heads." I'll do all I can at this end. Go to it, Red-Heads!

THE following suggestion from Milwaukee has to do with National Defense, and so is worth listening to:

Since the first mention of the American Legion in *Adventure* I have been expecting to hear what Uncle Sam might do to make it easier for those who wish to be as well prepared as possible when the day comes that they will be needed.

ONE decided help would be the granting by the Government to members of the Legion the same privilege enjoyed by the National Rifle Association—permission to purchase for their individual use the regular service arms, and this might well be extended to cover all articles of standard army service equipment. To so equip himself would in many cases mean a financial sacrifice, but I do believe that this privilege would be taken advantage of to a far greater extent than any of us now realize.

Furthermore, in the majority of cases, the man who does so equip himself would be very much in earnest, and apt to be a genuine dyed-in-the-wool outdoor man. It also would be to a certain extent an incentive to a more rapid growth of the Legion, once the fact becomes generally known, as it would show that the Government takes the movement at its face value, and desires to encourage it. The above, of course, applies only to those who wish to own their equipment and in no sense implies any obligation upon members unable or unwilling to invest.

IMAGINE what it would mean to have available a body of men each of whom has at hand a full service equipment, and who, while not drilled, can report at assembling points on the shortest possible notice. These men will have shoes that fit, they will have a fair knowledge of the possibilities of their equipment for comfort and use, and a reasonable knowledge of the functioning of their arms, even if they are not expert marksmen. It is not too much to expect that such men as I have in mind might have a few handfuls of service cartridges concealed about their persons.

Possibly my imagination has run away with me, but until it is proven otherwise, I shall believe that there are a large number who feel as I do.

Is not *now* a good time to put this idea before the country?

MEANWHILE the American Legion is already in existence. It needs men trained not only in army, navy or militia, but in any one of over seventy trades, businesses and professions that become of vital importance on the outbreak of war. Write to the Secretary, American Legion, 10 Bridge St., New York.

OUR identification-cards remain free to any reader. The two names and addresses and a stamped envelope bring you one.

The cards bear this inscription, printed in English French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of ADVENTURE, New York, U. S. A., stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. The names and addresses will be treated as confidential by us. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for purposes of business identification. Later, arrangements may perhaps be made for money deposits to cover cable or telegraph notifications. Cards furnished free of charge, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application. Send no applications without the two names and two addresses in full.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Later, for the cost of manufacture, we may furnish, instead of the above cards, a card or tag, proof against heat, water and general wear and tear, for adventurers when actually in the jungle, desert, etc.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give the two names and addresses in full when applying.*

WHILE we can by no means promise anything definite, whenever we can find space we'll publish notices from those who have back copies of *Adventure* and are willing to part with them. Back copies of this magazine are hard to get and many of you are seeking them.

As previously explained, this office can supply no copies back of 1914, with the exception of a few of June and September, 1912. Even 1914 is pretty well exhausted, there being, at this writing, only a dozen or two of each issue. What we have will be supplied at the regular price, 15 cents.

I have some seventeen issues on hand of '13, '14, '15. Having read them and having no further use for them, I would sell the whole lot for one dollar

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(the transportation charges to be paid by the buyer). Or in singles, 15 cents, postpaid. The issues are as follows: Jan., June, July, Sept., Oct. and Nov. of 1914. The issues of Jan., Mch., June, July, Aug., Oct. and Dec. of 1913. The issues of Jan., Feb., Mch. and Apl. of 1915.—JOHN MARKEL, JR., 2184 W. 81st St., Cleveland, O.

HERE is another letter, from a physician, on back issues of *Adventure*, with a suggestion bearing on the war:

I note your item as to scarcity of back copies and the letter from C 1314 who is evidently some distance from your headquarters. I have no doubt you have other letters from *Adventure* readers serving their country in the trenches who would like to see *Adventure* as regularly as possible.

Would it not be possible for us fellows who are safe at home and read *Adventure* regularly to send our back copies to some central point from which they could be sent to our comrades in the trenches?

I HAVE at least one complete year and a lot of odd copies picked up in book-stores which I will be glad to donate, and if every other reader will do some contributing, we might send a little cheer and pleasure.

If this can not be accomplished, my back copies are at the service of any of the family who will send postage for one or more numbers of those I may have, which are practically all of 1913 and 1914.—S. J. FORT, M. D., Celston Heights, P. O. Station D, Baltimore, Md.

I HAVE written to the New York consuls of all the belligerent nations, asking the names of any agencies through whom magazines might be forwarded to men in the trenches. There are, of course, a good many English-reading men in the armies of Germany, Italy, Austria, Russia, and some in those of France, Belgium, and the Balkan states.

The agencies so far given me by the local consuls are:

Austria:	Oesterr., Rotes Kreuz, Vienna.
Belgium:	See France.
England:	See France.
France:	War Relief Clearing House for France and her Allies, 15 Broad St., New York; Scottish Women's Hospital, 20e région, Place de Troyes, Hôpital Auxiliaire Bénévolé No. 301, Chanteloup, France.
Germany:	German Red Cross Delegates, 1123 Broadway, New York.
Italy:	See France.
Russia:	Red Cross Society, Petrograd.
Turkey:	Djelal Neury Bey, 5 rue Hajaran, Galata, Constantinople.

DEATH comes too often for it to be safe to send individually to the members of our Camp-Fire who are on the firing-line. I have heard recently from W. Townend and Albert Kinross, but it has been a suspiciously long time since any word has come from or about Major W. Robert Foran, Theodore Goodrich Roberts, Lovett, Winters, C 1314, Hofford, Pryce, and our several friends in the French Foreign Legion, the Canadian Contingent, the Royal Flying Squadron and elsewhere. The Vicomte de Rancougne was, in the early Summer, a prisoner of war in Darmstadt. (Lovett, on July 14, reported the *Agamemnon not* sunk but still in action.)

I wonder how many of these friends of ours will be left to us when the war is over?

BACK issues of *Adventure:*

1910, months 11, 12; 1911 (1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9); 1912 (10); 1915 complete. $1 per doz. for lot; 15 c. each back of 1913, 10 c. for others. Carriage extra.—Wm. Munday, Walkerville, Ont., Canada.

1910 (11, 12); 1911 (1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11); 1912 (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10); 1914 (4).—Mrs. Benj. L. Lathrop, 935 Webster Ave., Scranton, Pa.

All issues from Aug. 1912 to date except 1914 (7, 8, 9).—Harry T. Black, 63 Waldemar Ave., Winthrop, Mass.

Mch. 1911 to date, complete.—Wm. A. Golden, 404 Diamond St., Pittsburgh, Pa.

1914 (5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12); 1915 (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9).—R. H. Stretch, 2657 37th Ave., S. W., Seattle, Wash.

All issues to date *except* 1911 (8); 1912 (5, 7, 9, 12); 1913 (8).—J. Jones, 297 Walnut St., Blue Island, Ill.

1913 and 1914 complete, $2. Carriage extra.—J. L. Fletcher, Richford, Vt.

AND then, of course, there are letters like the following, from those of you who will not part with your back files of *Adventure* at any price:

DEAR FRIEND:

I address you as friend because you have been a friend to all who like clean fiction with a little excitement. I am no adventurer and have never been outside of the U. S. A. or Canada.

I noticed your article in the Camp-Fire on back copies. I wish to say that I have a copy of each issue ever printed by you from Vol. I, No. 1, to Vol. X, No. 6, and as you speak of having holders of back copies letting you know when they wish to dispose of their old volumes, I will say that I am not so "hard up" yet as to sell any of them. Some day, when there is no hope of getting any grub otherwise, I may want to sell, but I think I'll go without a sandwich for several days first. I have a card index of all authors and their stories under their names. I can never repay the man who drew my attention to your first issue, and he was no newsdealer either. —F. C. MOYER, Reading, Pa.

LETTER FRIENDS

Note—This is a service for those of our readers who want some one to write to. For adventurers afield who want a stay-at-home "letter-bunkie," and for

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stay-at-homes, whether ex-adventurers or not, who wish to get into friendly touch with some one who is out "doing things." We publish names and addresses—the rest is up to you, and of course we assume no responsibility of any kind. Women not admitted.

(13) Tod Fuller, Grey Mountain P. O., Mojave Desert Calif.
(14) A. F. Gilman, Jr., Ripon, Wis. (Interested in fishing.)

TALKING and kicking are one thing. *Doing something* is another. If you believe in better national defense, do something. And do it when and where it counts. This is the season of elections—of new Congressmen and State legislators. Go after them. Write to them. Get your friends to write. Make clear what you expect them to do for their country and that you are watching them and will hold them to account.

It is refreshing to note that EVERYBODY'S is making a splendid campaign toward this end—showing what is needed and how to get it. Do your part too. Don't just talk.

AS TO those members of our Camp-Fire in the great war. Some will come back; some will not. It will be some time before the complete tally can be made. Some are already planning to go straight to other fields of adventure. Meanwhile many friends and acquaintances—sometimes even relatives—will be in doubt as to their fate. It would take a deal of time and letter-writing to notify all who know them.

Let's prepare for this in advance. Let each survivor notify this magazine promptly on his return and we will publish their names as space allows. Some of them will see this notice. Friends can tell the others. In no other way can the tally be made complete. And it's worth doing.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

WANTED —MEN

NOTE.—We offer this corner of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to our readers. Naturally we can not vouch for any of the letters, the writers thereof, or any of the claims set forth therein, beyond the fact that we receive and publish these letters in good faith. We reserve the privilege of not publishing any letters or parts of a letter. Any inquiry for men sent to this magazine will be considered as intended for publication, at our discretion, in this department, with all names and addresses given therein printed in full, unless such inquiry contains contrary instructions. In the latter case we reserve the right to substitute for real names any numbers or other names. We are ready to forward mail through this office, but assume no responsibility therefor. **N.B.—Items asking for money rather than men will not be published.**

THREE or four men between 20 and 30 yrs., to go with me as partners on a trip by burro teams from Phoenix, Ariz., to New Orleans, La., a distance of about 1800 miles, requiring about 6 months' time. The hunting, fishing and prospecting en route will be the source of amusement and excitement. Each man should have $100 in money for his share of expense, in addition to his personal equipment. Expect to start about December 1, 1915.—Address JOHN C. CARTER, Gila Bend, Ariz.

Inquiries for opportunities instead of men are NOT printed in this department.

TWO good men who understand gold prospecting to correspond with me. I have a proposition which may mean a neat little sum for the three of us. By good management, we can see ourselves through on $75 each. Only men who can rough it need apply.—Address E. H. REORDAN, 87 Mead Ave., Meadville, Pa.

YOUNG fellow, 18 to 25 yrs., who is able to handle a camera, for a two or three months' walking trip through Central America next Summer. Chap who has roughed it and speaks some Spanish preferred.—Address No. 297.

TWO partners to take up sensational cycle acts. Must be courageous, cool rider for speed, must not use liquor, and stand his share of expenses. From 22 to 30 yrs., not over 5 ft. 6 in., must weigh 150 lbs. or more. Prefer some one acquainted with park managers.—Address AL DE COSTE, 50 Waverly St., Malden, Mass.

TWO young men to go with me to South America, help in taking commercial and other moving pictures. Some knowledge of Spanish preferred. Route, through Cuba to Porto Rico, La Guayra, Caracas, back to Colombia, then through to Peru. Your own expenses and comradeship all that is required of you. A share of profits also yours. Clean, square-minded men only need apply.—Address DON GORDON, Box 1369, Jacksonville, Fla.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE.—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

SHINN, J. W. or G. W., lawyer, last heard of Missouri, 1869. Lived in St. Louis, 1868, and Philadelphia previous to that. Married Mary E. Franklin. His only daughter, Louisa, is seeking him.—Address L. T. 298.

HINDS, JOHN HAMILTON, last heard of in Philadelphia. 18 yrs., 5 ft. 6 in., 140 lbs., black hair, dark eyes. Expert rifle shot.—Address E. DE JOSEPH, Wayne, Pa.

RYERSON, Daniel Sherman, last heard of in Arizona. Spent most of his life in the West, principally in Colorado. About 50 yrs.—Address DAVID Y. ROBINSON, 6177 Berlin Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

FELKER, WALTER A., last heard of in Tacoma, Wash. Served in Co. A., 21st U. S. Inf., in Philippines 1904-1906.—Address L. O. DARNELL, Roachdale, Ind.

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JONES, WILSON M., or his children. Formerly policeman, living in Arsenal St., S. St. Louis. Married Kitty Franklin, my aunt, who was last heard of in Denver, Colo., about 1880. Should like to get in communication with members of this family. There were several children, Clara B., Walter S., Medella, Edith, George W., Benjamin F., and two others.—Address L. T. 298.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

ANY one who served in the 3d Special Service Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment of Infantry, Company D, Halifax, N. S., 1899-1900.—Address JOHN A. MACCREA, 305 West Newell St., Syracuse, N. Y.

STALEY, FRANK N., formerly of Half Moon Bay, Cal. Last heard of somewhere in South America. Will learn of something to his advantage.—Address J. C. YOUNG, Box 144, Weed, Cal.

BENNETT, RICHARD P., cousin. Last heard from several years since at Mount Clemens, Mich. Was then traveling for some Columbus, Ohio, shoe house.—Address H. C. B., Box 574, Jerome, Ariz.

CARL, B. S. Come home. Everything O. K. You are needed badly. Send me your address so I can write you.—A. O. S.

Inquiries will be printed three times. In the January and July issues all unfound back names will be printed again.

FRANKLIN, WILLIAM W., mining man, blacksmith, last heard of in Hamilton, Nev., 1883. Lived in Texas previous to that. Native of Missouri, born about 1845. His niece is seeking him.—Address L. T. 298.

DAVENPORT, WILLIAM L., brother, lived in Anderson, S. C., 38 yrs. ago. Last heard of Dexter, Texas.—Address MRS. EMMA G. TURNER, 317 Main St., E. Nashville, Tenn.

SCOTT, JOHNSON W., last heard of working as track foreman, K. C. S. Ry., Noble, La. Moved later to Port Arthur, Texas. Letters to him returned. Is a Royal Arch mason; 62 yrs.—Address F. E. FARR, Welsh, La.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

UNDERWOOD, I. T., last heard of in Columbus, O. Information as to whereabouts.—Address C. L. K., Lock Box 93, Sheldon, Iowa.

GLEN, S. ROWE, last heard of as wireless on yacht *Sialia*. Write Ted Dickson, Jr., care *Adventure*.

HARLOW, ROBERT PINKNEY, of New York City. Lawyer. 70 yrs. old.—Address JOHN W. HARLOW, Yeso, New Mexico.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

POPE, BILLY; last heard from in Texas. Please write your mother.

HUGGART, GEORGE N., last heard of in Peoria, Ill. Write and send present address to your sister.—Address MRS. ANNA H. GILBERT, 712 N. Adams St., Peoria, Ill.

H. G. G. Your letter received from Mobile, Ala. Write me or come home.—Address J. W. GOFF, Enterprise, Ala.

Inquiries will be printed three times. In the January and July issues all unfound back names will be printed again.

GALLAWAY, KARL H., nephew. Last seen in Texarkana, Texas, en route to St. Louis, Feb., 1913.—Address MRS. C. C. GALLAWAY, Rockland, Tyler Co., Texas.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the October or November issues of *Adventure*. They can get name of inquirer from this magazine:

ADAMS, Will Holden, Vicksburg, Miss.; Allen, Martin Danon; Alva, Stockwell; Barber, Wallie; Bell, William Sumner; Belt, Dr. H. P.; Black, Leslie, Huntly, Mont.; Bleckier, Thomas; Bowhan, W. H., Colo. Nat. Guard, 1913-14; Brown, traveling mate, Portland to Weed, 1912; Buckner (Blume), Henry Ansil; Campbell, Joseph N.; Courish, Andrew, N. M., 1898; Cravens, James S., Springfield, Mo.; Cranves, Reecie B. and Tollie T., Prices Branch, Mo.; Darst, Red, "Memphis Red" or "Redshear;" Frank, E. S.; Fuller, S. J.; Gazzale, Andrew Mellers; Grace, Mike, somewhere Rocky Mts., 1900; Graves, "Jim," G Battery, 3d U. S. Heavy Artillery; Hamm, Robert E., Hallettsville, Tex., 1899; Hamilton, Thomas K., Braintree, Mass.; Hill, John Warren; Hoeker, Louis; Holgate, Clem (Sunny); Hoover, Ferris E., Downers Grove, Ill.; Irving, James D., Private, Co. A, 18th Inf., Ft. Clark, Tex., 1899; Jenkins, Thomas Clayton, Wales; Jennings, Ben; Johnson, A. E., Redstone, Mont.; Juan; Juno, A. E.; Kaplan, Paul, Kemmerer, Wyo., 1914; Kellar, William S., Tampa, Fla.; Kelley, Dewey Sam, French Gulch, Mont.; Kern, Max, Cuba, 1907-8; Kernohan, Frank; Knight, Charles L., Cuba, 1907-8; Lewers, Nate; Long, Harry; Miller, Jacob; Milligan, Archie, Terapata, Peru, S. A., 1906-7; Monroe, Joe R.; Morgan, Earl, Boston, Mass.; Morissey, Warren (or Morrissey); Mudd, Clarence, St. Louis, 1913; Mullen, H. E. (Mac), Peoria, Ill.; Perry, Mark M., Co. B, 1st Inf., Philippines, 1900-3; Pettinger, Eugene; Phillips, J. R. ("Red," "Jasper" or "Perique"); Piper, E. E., Gearhart, Ore., 1914; Portwood, Alf, blacksmith; Reardon, John Patrick, Alger, Ohio, 1911; Redpath, Adam, Pendleton, Ore., 1913; Remes, Alexander or "Allie," East Exeter, Me.; Reynolds, Wm. P., Chicago, 1908; Robertson, Wyndham; Shumaker, Robert F., Central America, 1909-10; Strong, S. O., Bisbee, Ariz., 1907; Theisen, Peter, Frank; Walters, George (Greasy); Wetter, Pierce and Telfair, Chicago; Whalley, Thomas, Brabants Horse, Boer War; Whelan, Frank, California, 1913; Williams, Jack, of Tien-Tsin, China; Williams, C. E., Colon, Panama; Wolf, Don W., St. Louis, July, 1914; Zeh, William Anton.

MISCELLANEOUS: Markle, surname, if any, in Va., write this magazine; Studabaker, Davy; "Bonnie" Bowen; Van Ochs and "Venus" Philips; O. K. Red (alias Canadian Red); any soldier, member National Military Home, Dayton, O., 1909, '10, '11 until June 20, 1912; Jim Foster, Milwaukee, St. Paul; Moore, Lafon, Louisville; Mylett, Manchester, N. H.; McLain, Butte; Pay Sergt. John Benham; all 4 of R. P. R's Transvaal; Red Maguire and McHenry, San Francisco, Cape Town; Ed Norton, New Orleans, Cape Town and Durban; Wild Bill Shea, Texas; Red O'Brien, Los Angeles; Daly Providence, Beira, P. E. Africa; Whitey Sullivan, Boston, Philippines and Orange Free State; Brackney, surname, to establish connections.

NUMBERS 56, 68, 73, 76, W '93, W 107, W 140, W 150, W 153, W 183, W 184, W 189, W 195, W 203, W 211, W 212, W 215, W 231, W 250, C 189, C 205, L. T. 207. Please send us your present addresses. Letters forwarded to you at addresses given us do not reach you.—Address A. S. HOFFMAN, care *Adventure*.

MANUSCRIPTS sent us by the following are being held by us, having been returned to us as unclaimed at the addresses furnished:

W. Lynch, Trenton, N. J.; Henry W. Edwards, New York; W. G. Gormley, Ontario, Canada; George Stillons, Chicago, Ill.; Francis Manston, Chicago, Cal.; James Perry, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Edward Weston, Rochester, N. Y.; R. Spanjardt, Montreal, Que., Can.

RANDOLPH H. ATKIN; S. N. Morgan, please send us your present addresses. Mail sent to you at addresses given us doesn't reach you.—Address A. S. HOFFMAN, care *Adventure*.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: As announced before, every item will be published three times, then taken out. But in the *January* and *July* numbers of each year we will publish the names of all who have been inquired for and remain unfound.

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